

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS: THE VISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS OF THE UN (DPKO/UN)¹

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on protection of civilians (POC) in the context of UN peacekeeping operations missions (PKO). The current PKO mandates are evaluated under this new emphasis on POC as the most important task of the mission mandate. First, this article presents an analysis of the Charter of the UN and PKO and following that, it talks about: the protection of civilians and the historical evolution of PKO; POC and its conceptualization according to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); protection of civilians planning; the actors who hold the responsibility of protecting civilians; the main challenges to the protection of civilians; the coordination among the PKO components; and a few consequences related to the failure in protecting civilians. As a conclusion, it talks not only about the importance to protect civilians as a task of the UN peace missions but also its evolution in this context. New concepts about the Responsibility to Protect are held under the perspective of the desires and the pledge of the international community to resolve conflicts and protect civilians. The new mandate of the UN peace mission in Congo (MONUSCO) with the creation of the Intervention Brigade of the Military Force is highlighted.

Key words: Protection of Civilians – peacekeeping operations – UN – MONUSCO

1. INTRODUCTION

As of the Peace Mission mandate in Sierra Leone in 1999, the UN Security Council has given tasks of protection of civilians to UN Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations. The peace mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was the first in which the mission to protect civilians is explicitly highlighted. Despite that, part of the population and the government of the host country have always expected that a UN peacekeeping mission should protect civilians.

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As a result of the increase of mandates with focus on protection – studies; conceptualization; exercises; and guidance and training material have been developed and spread throughout troop and police contributing countries and field missions.

In turn, over time, the mandates, despite being political components, have become clearer and more incisive in their relative language towards protection of civilians (POC). Nowadays, they often place POC as the most important task of the mission mandate, to which all the resource priorities must be given, accomplishing with the use of all the necessary means. However, there is the observation of the logic according to which it is practically impossible to protect civilians in all places and at all times due to existing restrictions of human, finance and material resources in a peace mission.

2. THE UN CHARTER AND THE PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

To better understand the vision of DPKO over POC, it is important to notice that the fundamental principle upon which the use of force is based is the principle of consent, defined, among others, in the Capstone Doctrine of the UN, disseminated in 2008. Consent, at the strategic level (which to the UN means Member State or country level), is an essential prerequisite so that the UN deploys a peacekeeping mission in a nation with internal conflict. If there is the use of force in a strategic way and there is no consent from the host government, then the UN intervention becomes a peace enforcement operation.

The peace operations of chapter VII of the Charter make use of coercive measures to reach peace, and they can be either peacekeeping or peace enforcement. Peacekeeping and peace enforcement are terms that do not exist in the Charter, but designations created to qualify solutions *ad hoc* and differentiate the concepts for a better understanding of what was being done at the moment. As an example of enforcement, it is worth remembering the case of Libya, when the Security Council (SC) authorized the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). There are also examples of UN Peacekeeping Operation according to Chapter VII, established by regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) or hybrids, with the participation of the UN and the AU (UNAMID). In summary, there is a wide range of possibilities and modalities of presence authorized by the SC in a country in conflict.

All the present peacekeeping operations are carried out with the consent of the host country and allow the use of all necessary means according to Chapter VII of the Charter, in which the use of force, including the use of lethal force, is authorized to protect civilians as

per the principles of distinction, proportionality and minimum use of force in the International Humanitarian Law.

It is interesting to notice, in the African Continent, the Security Council has tried, in the last few years, to authorize regional organizations capable of and with political will to execute peacekeeping operations according to Chapter VII. These are the cases of the missions in Mali and in the Central African Republic which were initially established by regional organizations (ECOWAS and ECCAS, respectively), encompassed by the African Union (AU) at a subsequent moment and, finally, directed to a transition to peacekeeping mission of DPKO.

3. THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING

Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) started in 1948 in the Middle East as a way to sustain understanding between countries, through observation, negotiation and interposition of military forces in support of a peace and cease fire agreement.

Most of them, until the end of the Cold War in 1989, were operations with predominance or exclusivity of a military component placed in a buffer zone between two national warring forces. The missions then were seen retrospectively as unidimensional, since there is the existence of only one component, the military. The peace missions from this period are usually called Traditional PKO. Here the notion of protection of civilians is fragile and obliterated by the restricted possibility of self-defense and of protection of UN military forces and by the limitations of the mandates of Chapter VI of the UN Charter which neither allocated resources nor gave the Forces legal support to the protection of civilians as presently understood.

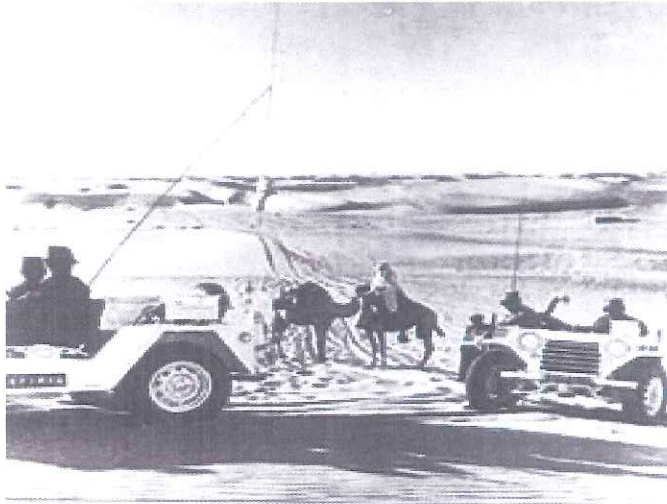


Photo: Brazilian peacekeepers in Suez (1957-1967)

After the end of the Cold War, there was a period of transition in which the effervescence of the national movements and the decrease of the pressure of the bipolarity Capitalism/Communism moved the external conflict (interstate) to the inside (intrastate) with the proliferation of civil wars and internal conflicts. The change of the nature of the conflict and its intensity, involving civilians as never before, caught the UN PKOs in a situation of lack of legal and structural preparation, with the consequent resource inadequacy. The gigantic failures in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia resulted in the lowest level of credibility in peacekeeping in the history of the UN, despite the fact that most part of the failure may be credited to the international community itself for not having provided some of those peace missions with material and human resources as well as political support.



Photo: Brazilian troops in Mozambique (ONUMOZ - 1994)

PKO, as a tool for the solution of conflicts, started being questioned in its validity and cost. The UN response was commissioning Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, from Algeria to examine the flaws and propose recommendations. His team studied in details the PKOs and DPKO structure in its different dimensions, possibilities and limitations, making public a report known as Brahimi Report in 2000, which in practical terms meant the reinterpretation of the principles of peacekeeping, especially impartiality and neutrality, consent and the use of force, as well as profound changes in DPKO structure. To this phase, which starts with the end of the Cold War and ends in the beginning of 2000, many give the name of Transition. It is in 1999, in that context, that UNAMSIL, in Sierra Leone, carries out the first mandate in which the protection of civilians is determined within the possibilities and resources of the mission.

During the 2000s, following the studies and recommendations proposed by the Brahimi Report, and as a reflection of the international happenings (especially the 09/11 and the Civil War in the Democratic Republic of Congo), new and relived concepts and ideas gained strength: planning and integration of components - civil, military and police of peace missions, responsibility to protect, robust peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, intelligence in the missions, improvement of the operational standards of equipment and use of new technology, peace missions with long term mandates aiming at institutional reconstruction and protection of civilians, to mention a few. In 2008, DPKO produced the Capstone Doctrine which defined the most important issues in UN peacekeeping operations.



Photo/ Brazilian Peacekeeper in Haiti (2004-)

Very complex missions such as MONUSCO and UNAMID, having POC in the center of their mandates, faced many times, distinctively and responsively and ad hoc, the challenges imposed by the protection of civilians.

MONUSCO, for example, has been equipped, over the years, with a higher military force, structures and means of coordination with focus on the protection of civilians (creation

of Ituri Brigade in 2003, Kivus Brigade in 2004, and the cell of protection of civilians, among other measures) until the culmination of the use of unarmed drones to develop information gathering and a better definition of threats; and the creation of the Force Intervention Brigade in 2013, with a different and specific mandate to give the Brigade legal basis to disarm, capture and neutralize armed groups in the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); in other words, a mandate with an offensive character, with few previous precedents.

4. PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND ITS CONCEPTUALIZATION ACCORDING TO DPKO

Internationally, inside and outside the UN System, protection of civilians has different meanings. In general, the concepts can be grouped in a vision based on fundamental rights (life, liberty, housing etc), a second vision that expresses protection as a result of peacebuilding and environment stability, and a third one to which protection means physical protection from violence.

In 2009, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), upon the request from the Secretariat and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (also known as C34), jointly carried out an independent study which analyzed different peace missions and concluded, among other aspects: a) the necessity of having DPKO in an extensive consultation with other actors involved in protection creates an operational concept for the protection of civilians; b) the inclusion of protection of civilians in the first planning phases of a peace mission; and c) the production of a written guidance so that field missions could develop their protection strategies.

As already mentioned, the Joint Study DPKO-OCHA (2008) gave the ground for the production of DPKO's Operational Concept for the protection of civilians. It is important to notice that the concept explains a position which is applicable for DPKO-led peacekeeping missions. Therefore, the concept does not suit missions authorized by the SC that do not fit the concept of UN PKO and are not led by DPKO.

In this concept, there was an attempt to conciliate the three visions aforementioned so that UN peace missions could be planned and give multidimensional responses. A multidimensional response of a peace mission happens when the civil (political affairs, civil affairs, human rights and others), military and police components of the operation act

coordinately and coherently to produce the best possible response of protection. During the development of the concept three levels of protection were taken into consideration:

Level 1): Protection by means of Political Process. The conflict does not have a military solution, only political; this way, it is essential that the parts in conflict be taken to the negotiation table and a situation of political stability is reached. In this case, a comprehensive political agreement allows violence and attacks on civilians to be curbed and the disputes between groups and the government start happening in the political level with decrease of threats;

Level 2): Protection against Physical Violence. It is the most visible of the levels, in which the human cost of the lack or inability to protect must be mitigated or eliminated; and,

Level 3): Protection by creating and maintaining an environment of protection. At this level, peacebuilding activities are planned and carried out to have great impact on the causes of the conflict, to meet long-lasting solutions that establish an environment of protection for the local population. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities of ex-combatants, Defense and Security Sector Reform in the country, demining and others cooperate to create this environment of protection of civilians.

Protection against physical violence was thought, at operational (mission leadership and staff) and tactical (mission components and subordinates) levels, to be planned and carried out based on the four phases of protection response: prevention, anticipation, response and consolidation.

In all the phases, it is desirable to have the participation of the peace mission components and also, if possible, of partners from outside the mission. This way, when addressing anticipation, for example, one can imagine that the military component must be intensifying patrolling and the contact with the local population and, also, taking a position to intervene between the attacking group and a village; in which, simultaneously, the human rights cell is monitoring the situation; the coordination of humanitarian aid is preparing support to the population together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs); the police component is guiding the national police to intervene and; the political component is putting a lot of pressure on the attacking group so the attack is not executed – all within a strategy of protection of the mission and in a coordinated manner, if possible.

It is also interesting to notice that, in 2009, the Security Council issued Resolution 1894 that affirms the necessity to reinforce and increase the protection of civilians and required the Secretary-General to act in order to produce training to all levels, including leaders of civil, military and police components of the peace missions. As a response and

catering to the recommendations made by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) prepared a Lessons Learned Note in POC (DPKO/DFS POC Lessons Learned Note - 2009), a Note with guidelines for the Development of Protection Strategies (Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilians (POC) Strategies in UN Peacekeeping Operations - 2010) and training material (syllabus and courses) in the operational (DPKO Operational Level POC Training Materials - 2011) and tactical levels (DPKO Tactical Level POC Training Materials - 2013) for field missions and troop and police contributing countries.

The last reflection on this part concerns the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The concept is relatively old and was originally an effort made by the Canadian Government to organize ideas and debate them internationally in the beginning of 2000. In 2005, the General Assembly ratified the conclusions of the UN High-Level Panel which handled the theme, claiming the countries should be responsible and protect their citizens, for when they did not do it, this responsibility would go to the international community, making legal an intervention without consent of the government of the country in question (strategic consent) for situations of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

In general, the concept is not controversial, but its use and implementation generate a heated debate in academic and diplomatic areas. A good example is observed through the actions taken by NATO in Libya, authorized by the SC. This intervention was perceived by many countries as having exceeded the SC mandate concerning the use of force. One of the effects of this perception was the release by Brazil, in 2011, of a variation of the concept called Responsibility while Protecting (RwP), by arguing in favor of a control significantly closer to the use of force in a strategic manner.

5. PLANNING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The planning for DPKO-led peacekeeping operations has suffered a great evolution since the Brahimi report and has been constantly improved towards greater integration and participation of several actors with direct and indirect responsibility when carrying out the mission. One of the most relevant areas concerns integration.

The concept of integrated mission started to be broadly debated from 2006 on, by reaching its standardization with the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP) at the end of that year. In April 2013, the process of planning for Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) was updated and is unexpired.

IAP recognizes that there are systemic difficulties to the total integration of the different participants of the UN System in the planning and configuration of a multidimensional peace operation, but aims at maximizing and reaching the greatest possible integration among political, peacekeeping, humanitarian, human rights and development entities, that is, adjusting the Integrated UN Presence. These systemic difficulties, broadly speaking, acknowledge that in the UN family there are organizations and agencies with different mandates which deserve respect and understanding.

This way, planning will happen at all levels and IAP will focus on the strategic part, in an attempt to gather the actors of this level of the Secretariat, of the international community and of the UN Country Team (UNCT). In truth, the level and the depth of integration among these different actors will be determined on a case by cases basis, according to the conflict and the political constraints in question

We will superficially examine the integrated planning process to observe where protection of civilians could fit. The follow-up of scenarios by DPKO and the attention given to certain areas in the world where there are potential conflicts and real tension can generate a Strategic Assessment which is the starting point of the operational design of a future peace mission.

Therefore, the Secretary-General will receive from the Chief of DPKO a strategic assessment with recommendations and suggestions so he can decide on different options and future written recommendations to the Security Council on the creation and viability of a peacekeeping mission or on the closure of an existing mission. According to the crisis lived in the country and the repercussions to the local population, the strategic assessment will contemplate the protection of civilians in the analyzed case.

On the other hand, sending a Technical Assessment Mission (TAM) to the possible mission area, with the obvious consent of the host country, allows a more concrete verification of the situation. The survey performed by TAM facilitates the preparation of the Mission Concept, of the Military and Police Concept of Operations (CONOPS), of the Working Plans, which will later be passed on to the peace mission to be adjusted according to the reality in the field.

A mandate that specifically determines protection of civilians as a task in a multidimensional PKO will bring a language which aims immediately at the physical protection of civilians in the host country of the mission, delineating determinants such as: a) take the necessary measures to do it; b) do it inside the mission areas of responsibility; c) do it

within the existing capacities; e d) do it without detriment to the primary responsibility of the government of the host country of the mission.

After the mandate and the following guideline of the Secretary-General to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), the planning will remain in the UNHQ through an Integrated Task Force (ITF), which gathers several sectors interested and carries out the elaboration of an Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) and of a Mission Concept. The Mission Concept is the plan through which the mission intends to implement its mandate and will surely have all the tasks of protection of civilians which were given in the mandate, expanded as orders to the subordinate components.

These documents reflect the strategic planning articulated among several actors (military, police and civilian personnel) and also sectors (political, human rights, humanitarian, development and others). All the tasks visualized for POC at this level must be included in these documents taking into consideration the limits and possibilities of integration already discussed.

Therefore, the Mission Concept is sent to the planners at the operational level, the staff assigned for the mission, who will probably already be in the field setting up the Headquarters and other structures of the peace mission, to make the necessary adjustments due to the reality in the field. Following that, POC tasks in the mandate, collimated in the ISF and in the Mission Concept, will be studied in light of the field to create the Mission POC Strategy.

The Strategy will be the task-orienting document, prospection of scenarios and definition of responsibilities and coordination of actors of existing protection in the mission areas, whether they belong to the mission or not, such as the UNCT or human rights, humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As seen before, the great objective is to give a multidimensional protection response to existing threats, with the coordination of the actors at the operational level (mission) and tactical (sectors and battalions and Formed Police Units, the known FPU, human rights, political and civil affairs teams, among others).

The Mission Concept and POC Strategy will guide the military, police and civil components of a PKO to adjust the respective Military and Police Concepts of Operations (CONOPS) and the Working Plans of the different civil components of the mission.

CONOPS and the Working Plans, which are documents received from the strategic level (written outside the mission area), become operational level documents (Mission Headquarters level) due to the adjustments done by the mission staff itself. They are, then, translated to the tactical level by the sector headquarters, battalions, members of the United

Nations Police (UNPOL) and the several civil components of the mission which are deployed at this level, such as regional and local human rights and political affairs offices, for instance.

The translation from the operational to the tactical level, concerning the military component, will happen by means of Operations Orders which will define the tactical actions related to the protection against the physical violence of the local population, in the several localities where the infantry battalions and companies are. The great capillarity of the military component is an important aspect and an advantage in the equation of protection of civilians against physical violence from the perspective that the areas of responsibility of the military units are enormous and usually of difficult access or communications.

At the end, because it relates to protection against physical violence, it is expected from Battalion Commanders to have the initiative of contacting and maintaining the contact with the other actors of protection in their areas of responsibility and make the possible coordinations so that the response is also multidimensional, from the tactical point of view. This way, for the military tasks, such as protection of displaced and refugees, patrolling and offensive interventions and others, to have the best possible protection response, they must be somehow coordinated with the other actors, within the limitations imposed by different tasks and objectives of each one.

It is yet interesting to say that the POC Strategy of the multidimensional mission is also used by the training mission cell, the Integrated Mission Training Center (IMTC), for the personnel training and dissemination of the strategy itself. The IMTC, then, prepares the mission training plan with a training program for protection of civilians that goes from the acclimatization phase of the newcomers to the mission area (induction training) to the sending of Mobile Training Teams to distant regions to jointly train civilian, military and police personnel. An excellent example of success in the implementation of protection of civilians training took place in UNMISS, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, in which a solid joint training program was carried out in ten states in the country, having the study of scenarios performed jointly by the civilian leadership, military and police personnel.

6. ACTORS WITH RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT CIVILIANS

There are many actors with responsibility over protection of civilians, inside and outside the peace mission: the government of the country which receives the peace mission (primary actor and responsible), the UN Peacekeeping Operation, the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN Children's

Fund (UNICEF), NGOs and organizations from society. Sometimes political arrangements authorized by the SC also bring other actors from outside the mission, such as military forces of countries with advanced military capacities, which operate in coordination with the UN PKO.

Firstly, let's stick ourselves to two actors to make some relevant remarks. The first is the government of the host country of the mission, which has the primary responsibility to protect its citizens. This concept is essential and is somehow related to Protect with Responsibility as the incapacity or lack of political will of the government is raised to justify an international intervention. Only to give emphasis to what has already been tackled here before, to DPKO, the consent of the host country is the key condition for the mission to protect civilians.

The second actor is the PKO, which must be ready to protect civilians in case there is an omission, inexistence or lack of will of the host government in protecting people; it should also support the national government, whenever possible, in the planning and execution of protection activities. Therefore, the peace mission at first does not directly replace the government, but supports it in its primary task of protecting its civilians.

Taking into account the responsibilities and capacities of the host country of the mission, the UN PKO must protect civilians whenever possible and so that happens, as previously mentioned, it must develop a Protection of Civilians Strategy as the most important document of the mission to guide the civil, military and police components in their plannings and preparation of operations concepts and working plans. The Strategy is decisive so that the mission can give responses of coordinated protection of their several components and partners from outside the mission.

It is fundamental to understand that some actors involved in protection of civilians have different mandates from the one belonging to the mission, especially humanitarian actors. These mandates must be respected. The NGOs, in the mission area, which somehow take part in protection of civilians' actions, sometimes as part of clusters, also have mandates and international donors who, naturally, define objectives that will not always coincide with those of the peace mission. The difference between the political objectives of the mission and the humanitarian ones of the humanitarian community may generate difficulties in coordination. Humanitarian actors request respect to the so-called humanitarian space, more related to the no invasion of the operational environment by other actors, especially the military personnel, than to the physical space. The association between the military personnel and the humanitarian agents can occasionally create the wrong perception that they belong to

the same group, and therefore, submit humanitarian agents to risks and insecurity as reprisal to military actions in the mission. We should always remember that many times the perception is that there is only one "UN" in the country, very visible in the white vehicles, and that military, police and civilian personnel are part of the same group.

Another interesting angle is to verify the great military strength of a few missions (MONUSCO - Democratic Republic of Congo; UNAMID - Darfur, Sudan; UNMISS - South Sudan; UNIFIL - Lebanon; MINUSCA - Central African Republic; MINUSMA - Mali; and UNOCI - Ivory Coast, among others); the peace operations, however, are not in general strongly equipped, from the military point of view, to protect from physical violence in every region of the country and face all threats present, in huge territories with great logistic obstacles. About that, it is remarkable the existence of several tones that makes it hard for troop deployment and to protect civilians, such as lack of mobility at tactical and operational levels, of adequate communications and operational intelligence, and others. DPKO, however, has conducted discussions with the international community and advances have been obtained in terms of equipment, operational guidance, training and mandates with bigger offensive freedom (see the Force Intervention Brigade of the Military Component in MONUSCO



Photo: Brazilian Navy in Lebanon (2012 -)

As the last and important message at this stage of the discussion, it is necessary to understand that the other actors involved in the protection are so important as the military component (that has the monopoly of the use of force in the mission) and the police one, and that these actors have leading roles in several situations in which their areas of expertise and operational capacities are higher or more adequate to the moment, to the phase and to the kind of protection response. As an example, it is natural to understand, for example, that in a

situation in which two thousand displaced people, when threatened, search for refuge in a military base of the UN mission with 100 soldiers. In this case, the physical protection can even be brought into effect satisfactorily for some time, but the humanitarian protection related to shelter, food and water supply for weeks exceeds the capacity of that tactical element of the military component and that will be led by the civil components.

7. MAIN CHALLENGES TO THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

There are several and significant challenges for the execution of protection of civilians in UN peace missions. Let's analyze some of them.

Difference between combatants and noncombatants. For years it has become difficult to distinguish civilians from noncombatants, especially in urban areas. Armed groups try to deliberately mingle with the civilian population to avoid becoming targets of the military or police action. The positive identification of a threat, people or group which is an active part in hostilities against civilians, is one of the most complicated and difficult activities in the mission area. It is based on intelligence and pro-active work of the military, police and civilian personnel, each one of their own activities, but with a common general plan to share information and send it to the Joint Operations Center (JOC) and Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC), at the appropriate time, to identify and locate armed groups. This work is also related to the constant liaison of elements at the tactical level with the local population, through the understanding of threats and how the population sees them as well as through the permanent liaison with UN agencies and NGOs deployed to these places.

Impartiality and neutrality. These concepts were reinterpreted as of the Brahimi report. Since then, the multidimensional mission with the mandate to protect civilians will never be neutral due to the threats to the population. The inertia is no longer tolerated and all peacekeepers have the duty to take measures and carry out actions to protect civilians. Military and police units must be trained to act according to the rules of engagement to provide protection to the local populations. The concept of impartiality in this case is related to the mandate. This means that the mandate must be accomplished and in case one of the parts of the conflict decides to attack civilians, the mission will face it to reduce or exterminate the threat, even if it means a perception of partiality in relation to a certain armed group.

Possibility of retaliation. After the actions to protect the population, in which, many times, the response of the mission generates armed confrontation against certain groups, there is a possibility that these same groups return to retaliate against the population that was

protected, as soon as the Military Force returns to its base. It is necessary to understand that the military component not always has the logistics and operational conditions to stay in the area indefinitely. If the security forces of the government cannot substitute and stay in the area, it is necessary to make due calculations in relation to the consequences whether or not to act to protect civilians.

National reconciliation and impunity. The national reconciliation is one of the most important political processes so that peace is obtained and the situation moves forward in the process of peacebuilding. However, it becomes vital to do a meticulous study of the characters involved in the process, with focus on the nonacceptance of people who committed war crimes or grave violations to the Humanitarian International Law as part of the political process of reconciliation. There are always risks that the process loses all its credibility and the conflict resumes if the criminals are not effectively punished.

Maintenance of the consent of the host country. The strategic consent was given at the moment when the host country accepted the deployment of the peace mission authorized by the SC resolution and, on that basis, legitimate. At the strategic level, it is also pursued a comprehensive peace accord in which the political classes of armed groups sign a peace or a cease-fire agreement. What happens is that not always the chains of command of these groups are solid enough to guarantee that at the tactical level the consent will be kept. This can lead to situations in which the direction of the group adheres to an agreement, but their local leaders do not accomplish what was agreed upon, creating problems in the protection of civilians at the local level.

Protection of the Military Force and POC. There may occasionally be a dilemma between the necessities of protection of the Military Force itself, in view of threats to the security and to the necessities of protection of local populations. There are always great risks to the credibility and the trust that the population may nurture towards the peacekeepers when they are using their means to protect themselves and not the population. These are always very complex situations in which the Force cannot renounce their own security, but they should carefully think of the actions to be executed.

Expectation and public information management. One of the greatest difficulties in conducting protection of civilians is to keep the main client, the local population, informed of what the peacekeepers can or cannot do to protect them. The management of expectations is crucial because the local population needs to understand which capacities the presence of the troop, police or even representatives of UN agencies offer in terms of protection. This can be obtained through constant liaison and contact with the leadership and local population

representatives to clear and exchange information, understanding of the threats and how the population sees them and the creation of mechanisms for a quick response from peacekeepers as well as from the community people such as calls, use of radio equipment, local alarm system etc.

8. COORDINATION AMONG THE MISSION COMPONENTS

Some ideas are highly relevant to understand the coordination inside the mission and the elements outside. The coordination itself is a challenge and is so important in a multidimensional mission that it must be addressed separately.

The first relevant idea is related to understanding that POC is a mission effort as a whole. To clarify, this means that one component only (military, police, civil) will hardly be able to carry out an effective protection of civilians in an isolated manner. The mission must produce, whenever possible, a multidimensional response. Sometimes, it is possible that a mission component does the main effort or detain the event's leadership, at a certain time, supported by other components, and start supporting the other component's effort next time. One good example concerns the protection given to people that are running away from an attack or looking for shelter near a mission military base. At this moment, the military element does the main effort, of security, but will not support logistically those people during several weeks. Food, tents, water and medicine support will be probably provided by a local UN agency, representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



Photo: POC in South Sudan (2013)

The second idea takes into account the fact that information must be shared by several cells which are part of the mission, but the right to privacy and security of each individual must be respected. Humanitarian agents usually negotiate access to populations who are in need, but also have operational-like information, that if occasionally sent to the military component, may imply in a combat action against certain armed group in the area. This might compromise the security of these same humanitarian agents in the future. Each DPKO multidimensional mission has hundreds of presence points in its area of responsibility (battalions, UNPOL teams, team sites with military observers, representatives of the civil components in the mission etc).

If the mission can establish an information sharing system among all these actors, from the tactical to the operational level, where there are structures such as the Joint Operations Center (JOC), Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) and the Joint Logistic Operations Center (JLOC), there are great chances that the peace mission command have an adequate preparation, prioritize scenarios of threats and take timely decision in relation to protection of civilians.

POC Strategy of the mission is an orienting-tool of the protection planning to all members of the mission. It is also the most important part to coordinate actors of protection. The planning must be ideally integrated in search of a multidimensional response. From the strategy on, the different components can plan taking into consideration scenarios, threats, vulnerability and risks for civilians present in the mission area and plan how to mitigate and reduce them. The strategy must express, at least, who, how and what must be done at the operational level in relation to the identified threats and scenarios in the strategy itself.

The document that guides the drafting of a strategy is the Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Strategies for the Protection of Civilians (POC) in UN Peacekeeping Operations. POC Strategy is a document with the operational focus, drafted by the Mission Headquarters, that expresses the previous agreed coordination and guides the preparation of operations orders and tactical plans to the protection action in all the territory of responsibility of the mission. A hostile armed group towards the civilians, for example, identified as a threat, from the operational view, in all or in part of the area of responsibility of the peace mission, must be included in the Strategy, which will generate subsequent tactical plans, with the local factions or parts of the same armed group seen as tactical threat by the infantry battalions to give protection responses.

At last, protection of children and sexual violence are issues that deserve the attention of all the mission components. They must be the center of the plannings and the actions must consider them as focal points to the action of protection due to the high vulnerability of these groups and to the impacts resulting of no protection. These impacts vary from human cost to the loss of credibility of the mission and its agents. Loss of mission credibility and the perception that the mission does not take interest towards the population, especially towards such vulnerable people, are products of inefficiency in protecting the local population.

9. SOME CONSEQUENCES RELATED TO FAILURES IN PROTECTING CIVILIANS

From the moment the UN peace mission systematically fails to protect the local population, it is very difficult to recover the lost prestige and legitimacy. At the strategic level, in the UNHQ in New York, together with the international community and the troop and individuals contributing countries, the political support to the mission becomes rare and can affect the renewal of the mandate and the existence of the mission itself. International donors that finance peacebuilding projects, for example, stop doing it or decrease the volume of resources. Dynamics such as Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and the UN Development Assistance Fund (UNDAF), which respectively try to establish international donor, partners and resources to humanitarian activities and of development, can suffer undesirable influences that end up affecting the support to the population itself.

At the operational level, in the command and staff of the peace mission, there is a strong loss of credibility and faith in the mission, having the local government and population distrust the capacity and determination of the mission in protecting civilians and taking risks to do it. Sometimes, these factors also affect the morale and commitment of the mission staff and corrode relations amongst the components, damaging the coordination actions that are necessary to protect civilians. When the government is suspicious of the determination and the posture of the mission in protecting civilians, it can end cooperation, exchange of information and the liaisons which are so necessary for the government and the mission to act coordinately, if necessary. Local and international means of communication give negative visibility to these inconsistencies, increasing the perception that the mission members are privileged in relation to the population, and not committed to their fate.

At the tactical level, the loss of legitimacy creates an increase of incidents that affect mission personnel security, with declared hostility or indifference by part of the local population who does not collaborate anymore with the mission on a daily basis and does not

provide further useful information to plan the protection of civilians. The practical side of the missions reveals that patrols are clearly hostile by means of aggressive treatment; meetings with local leaders are not obtained anymore, loss of regularity or the results are meaningless and; the local population is suspicious of peacekeepers' intentions and is afraid of reprisals from armed groups. As a consequence, not only can peacekeepers' security be damaged but also its capacity to understand the environment. At this point, patrolling is useless to the purpose of protecting civilians, but only for the physical coverage of the area of responsibility.

10. CONCLUSION

Protection of civilians has always been and will always be a task of the UN peace missions. It has been more than ten years that POC became the main task of multidimensional peace missions mandates and has increasingly defined the reputation of the missions.

POC is also a dynamic issue. It evolves until it gets to an international consensus that the protection of civilians is absolutely essential when there is a peace mission deployed to an area of conflict. From then on, a vision of DPKO for peace operations led by the department was studied and discussed, defined in an Operational Concept, which was and is the ground for the creation of standards, guidelines and training material for peace missions.

However, it must be noted that the protection of civilians is still a controversial subject when used as a primary justification for international intervention. What seems to be internationally agreed upon and solidified as legitimate is the deployment of force for the protection of civilians in UN multidimensional peace operations led by DPKO.

Concepts such as Responsibility while Protecting, despite being absorbed and affirmed in one of the UN High-Level Panels, does not yet represent a doctrine broadly accepted by the international community; it is the center of many questionings every time it is used to explain intervention outside the concept of UN peace mission, even when authorized by the Security Council.

Finally, it is necessary to understand that the UN and, especially, DPKO are reflections of desires and of the pledges of the international community to solve conflicts and protect civilians by means of the existing political architecture. Nevertheless, it is a fact that DPKO-led multidimensional missions have been constantly perfected in a way to better provide equipment and freedom of action to carry out a protection, if not totally effective, at least present and active. The Force Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO is the most recent

political-military experience included in the long production of responses of peace missions to challenges imposed by threats against civilians – up to the present moment, an absolute success in what its mandate proposed.

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