Unintended consequences of peacekeeping

Introduction

This article deals with the poorly understood and as yet inadequately conceptualised phenomenon of the unintended consequences of peace operations. We now know from recent literature, public criticism and international debate that some unintended consequences, for instance sexual abuse and exploitation, can be extremely damaging to individuals and communities where peacekeepers are deployed. These unintended consequences and others, such as the impact of a rapid and large external intervention on a fragile host society and economy, can weaken the ability of a peace operation to achieve its intended objectives. In fact, some unintended consequences can harm the very concept of peace operations and undermine the legitimacy of the organisations that are responsible for their deployment.

Our aim is to improve our understanding of how unintended consequences come about, and to explore ways in which those planning and managing peace operations can improve their ability to anticipate, mitigate and manage potential unintended consequences. The overall purpose of this article is to contribute to the improvement of peace operations. Traditional peacekeeping was intended to have a neutral impact on the ceasefires or peace agreements they were mandated to observe. They were not meant to have any impact on the future direction of the peace process other than to bolster the fragile peace that existed by monitoring the status quo.[1] In the post-Cold War era, however, the focus of peace operations has gradually shifted from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, in that they have become complex, integrated, whole-of-government, multifaceted operations aimed at supporting and facilitating the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements.[2] This modification in the role and scope of, especially United Nations (UN), peace operations has taken place over the last decade and a half and has exposed peace operations to a new range of potential unintended consequences it has not had to manage before. We consider peace operations to be an indispensable instrument in the international conflict management toolbox. It is therefore in our collective interest to learn lessons from both our successes and failures.

The authors of this article co-edited a volume under the same title and this article is meant to share the insights gained from that study with the broader peacekeeping community.[3]

What do we mean by 'unintended consequences'?

No intervention in a complex system like a human society can have only one effect. Complex systems are dynamic and respond to interventions in a non-linear fashion.[4] We may be able to anticipate some of the ways in which a complex system will respond to an intervention, including the responses we intended to stimulate through our intervention. However, the system will also respond in ways that we could not anticipate.[5] Those reactions that fall outside the scope of the response we intended to elicit are the unintended consequences of our intervention.

If we accept that unintended consequences are a natural outcome of the dynamic nature of complex systems, then we also have to recognise that they cannot be avoided altogether. This implies that we should anticipate that despite our best efforts to limit

Cedric De Coning is a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). He served as a diplomat for South Africa in Washington, D.C. and Addis Ababa (1995-1997) and has monitored elections in Ethiopia, Sudan and Algeria for the Organisation of African Unity (1995-1997). He was a civil affairs, and later political affairs, officer for the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (1999 and 2001), and a training officer in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2002). De Coning holds a MA from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and is a DPhil candidate at the University of Stellenbosch.

Chiyuki Aoi is an Associate Professor of International Politics at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan.

Ramesh Thakur is a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation and Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo, Canada.

1 Lester B. Pearson, quoted in Brian Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*. Norton: New York, 1994, p. 176.

2 On the transformation of peacekeeping there is an abundance of literature. See, for instance, Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel (eds) (2002). *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*: Ad hoc missions, permanent engagement. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

3 C. Aoi, C.H. de Coning and R. Thakur (eds) (2007). Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

4 For more information on the dynamics of complex systems, see Anatol Rapoport, 'Systems analysis: general systems theory', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 15 (1968). New York: Free Press, p. 453; and Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory: Foundations, development, applications.* Braziller: New York, 1986: 55.

5 Paul Cilliers (1998). *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding complex systems*, London: Routledge, p.3.

our actions to those necessary to achieve a desired outcome, unintended consequences are likely to occur.

The unintended consequences of a peace operation are those effects, outcomes and impacts that have come about as a result of the operation but that were not intended in the mandate of the operation, nor in its implementation. UN – authorised peace operations have mandates that are formulated in the form of a UN Security Council resolution. The intended consequences of these operations can be determined by analysing these resolutions.

Some unintended consequences should have been foreseen or anticipated, especially if they have occurred under similar circumstances in the past, while others may be totally unexpected. These nuances may have important implications and will be discussed in more detail. It is also important to note that not all unintended consequences are necessarily negative; some may be neutral and others may actually be positive. Our focus will, however, be on the negative unintended consequences, because they are the harmful to the local communities that peace operations are intended to serve, harmful to the very notion of international peace interventions aimed at supporting and facilitat-

ing local peace processes, and harmful to the organisations that mandate and deploy such operations.

A few qualifications need to be made. First, unintended consequences need to be distinguished from failure to achieve intended consequences.[6] Second, unintended consequences need to be distinguished from the 'mixed motive' phenomenon in intervention decisions. We accept states participating in peace operations may have motives for supporting such operations other than those stated in the formal mandate of the operation. We do not consider such mixed motives to be unintended consequences of peace operations. We do recognise, however, that they may cause or aggravate unintended consequences and will then be addressed in that context.

The scope of 'unintended consequences'

It is also important to note at the outset that the fact that this article is devoted to unintended consequences is not meant to suggest that this phenomenon occurs at a scale that implies that peace operations are doomed to failure. We argue that peace operations will always generate some consequences that will be unintended, but we do not address the frequency or scope of such unintended consequences in this article.

We were unable to make a meaningful assessment of the overall scale and impact of unintended consequences in peace operations, and further research will be needed before any definitive findings can be made in this regard. If we use the cases covered in our study[7] as a sample, there are no missions that have failed as a direct result of the unintended consequences they have generated. There are many, however, whose effectiveness has been negatively affected by some of the unintended consequences they have generated. And there are some that have generated consequences far beyond specific peace operations. The sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers of those that they have been mandated to protect, has undermined the credibility of the UN, its Secretary General and of peace operations as an international conflict management instrument.

Albert Hirschman points out that straightforward effects, i.e. intended consequences, are common and often dominate perverse ones.[8] Jervis argues that if this were not the case, it would be hard to see how societies can make progress or how any stable human interaction could develop.[9] In other words, the fact that unintended consequences will occur does not render futile the whole enterprise of mandating, planning and

6 For a critical view of strategic effectiveness of peacekeeping deployments see Richard Betts, 'Delusion of Impartial Intervention', *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1994. Fortna also tests realist as well as institutionalist propositions about the impact of peace processes accompanied by peacekeeping deployments. See Page Fortna, Peace Time: *Cease-fire agreement and the durability of peace*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

7 Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

8 Albert Hirschman, *Rhetoric of Reaction*, quoted in R. Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in political and social life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 68.

9 Jervis, op. cit., footnote 8, p. 68.

managing peace operations. The central message of this article is that we have to recognise that unintended consequences are a predictable side-effect of peace operations. They should therefore be factored into the mandating, planning and managing of peace operations so that their potential effects can be anticipated and managed.

Why is the focus of unintended consequences new?

We were struck by the absence of literature on, or even remotely related to, the phenomenon of unintended consequences of peace operations. Most of the references that were available are anecdotal. The failure to take unintended consequences into account probably stems from the fact that researchers and practitioners have been preoccupied with the intended consequences of peace operations.

We have been concerned with improving the ability of peace operations to achieve their intended objectives. We have studied peace operations to find out whether they have been successful, and in measuring their success our focus has usually been on whether they have achieved the mandates with which they were tasked. Where they were not, we focused on what could have been done differently to make them successful. However, a number of incidents have come to our collective attention over the last decade and a half that made us realise that peace operations can also generate unintended consequences.

Liberal assumptions about peace operations

This lack of attention to and awareness of the unintended consequences of peace operations is also due to deeply embedded and uncritical liberal assumptions about peace operations.[10] Not only are peace operations expected to serve largely liberal-internationalist purposes of creating stable, market-oriented, democratic polities,[11] which are regarded as inherently 'good', but they are at the same time expected to be successful. Decision-makers, practitioners in the field and analysts operate according to the belief that peace operations authorised by the Security Council reflect the will of the international community and therefore are inherently 'good'. Peace operations are therefore expected to produce positive outcomes such as promoting stability and durable peace; they are expected to rebuild and develop and they are expected to generate respect for the rule of law, human rights and democracy. Participation in peace operations by troop-contributing countries is thus a contribution to the global good and the risks involved, including casualties, is regarded as a noble sacrifice for the greater good.[12]

After the failures of the missions in the early 1990s in Somalia, the Balkans and Rwanda, the liberal assumption has been tempered to accept that peace operations may, for a variety of reasons, fail to produce these intended results. Some may even concede, after the highly publicised sexual abuse scandals, that peace operations may, under exceptional circumstances, have unintended consequences. But such incidents have been viewed as exceptional, once off, phenomena, caused by a handful of 'bad apples' acting outside the norm. The liberal assumption has not yet matured to the extent where it is recognised that peace operations, as a matter of course, generate unintended consequences, including negative economic, social and political side-effects that are contrary to the liberal intent. It has not yet absorbed that unintended consequences come about as part of the non-linear and dynamic behaviour of complex systems, and are thus a systemic consequence of peace interventions.

The fact that peace operations will generate a variety of unintended consequences, some of which may be negative and even pathological to the mandate or intended consequences of the mission, is thus counter-

10 For the classic critique of the liberal agenda of modernisation, see Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies.* Yale University Press, 1968.

11 On the liberal-internationalist agenda of peacebuilding missions, see Roland Paris, 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism'. *International Security* 22(2), fall 1997, pp. 54–89; and from the same author (2004) *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict,* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

12 A. Sotomayor, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries in South America: The cases of Argentina and Uruguay', pp. 171-92 in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2. See also, Charles Moskos (1976). *Peace Soldiers: The Sociology of a United Nations Military Force.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

intuitive to many observers under the influence of the liberal assumption.

This article aims to stimulate awareness that all peace operations generate 'unintended consequences', so that it becomes common practise for decision-makers, practitioners and researchers to anticipate, mitigate, manage and respond to potential unintended consequences in the planning, execution and evaluation of peace operations.

Examples of unintended consequences

If we accept that unintended consequences are likely to occur, and that they can have a significant impact on the outcome and impact of a peace operation, then we have to improve our ability to anticipate and take steps to try to prevent some of the negative unintended consequences. In others we may have to be satisfied with merely containing and managing the potential negative effects of these unintended consequences. And if we manage to do so with some success, the result should be an improvement in the overall effectiveness of peace operations.

In this context it may be useful to discuss a few examples of unintended consequences. Our study covered a number of other topics related to the unintended consequences of peace operations, such as: sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, distortions of the local economy, impact on host systems, impact on humanitarian action, civil–military coordination, impact on troop contributing countries, the legal position of the United Nations and institutional responses to unintended consequences by the UN and others. For the purposes of this article we have grouped some of the major findings generated by the study under the following topics: permissive environment, impact on local economy, impact on local civil service, and impact on troop contributing countries.

Permissive environment

The breakdown of law and order, socio-economic infrastructure and social-cultural norms, the prevailing post-conflict condition in which most peace operations operate, create a fertile ground for unintended consequences to occur. A breakdown of this nature implies that the natural checks and balances that would otherwise identify, contain and manage potential negative effects are absent. For instance, it is now recognised that sexual and gender-based violence is often part of a conscious strategy to demoralise the opposing side in a conflict. Kent argues that such violence can become institutionalised in post-conflict societies when the conditions that created the violence remain in place.[13] She points out that extreme poverty, lack of economic opportunity, lack of employment and the loss of family and community support networks, all account for the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse in post-conflict societies, not only by local predators but also by international peacekeepers. This would explain, for instance, why human trafficking seems to thrive in post-conflict societies.[14]

Impact on local economy

The deployment of a peace operation, involving tens of thousands of international civilian, police and military peacekeepers over a relatively short period of time, have various positive and negative effects on the host system. It most cases considered in our study, the presence of the peace operation, humanitarian community and other external actors making up the expatriate community distorted the local economy and stimulated the development of a dual economy, one which served the needs of the expatriate community and another that served the local population. In general, the impact the expatriate community is likely to have on the host system is related to the degree of poverty that existed in that society at the time of the intervention, and the extent of the devastation caused by the conflict. In most cases the budget of the peace operation alone is several times that of the GDP of the host system. The direct effect on the host system, financially speaking, is limited to the funds injected by the peace operation, and the peacekeepers individually, into the host system.

---

13 V. Kent, 'Protecting civilians from UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers: sexual exploitation and abuse', pp. 44-66, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.
14 S. Koyama and H. Myrttinen, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations on Timor Leste from a gender perspective', p. 41, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

Ammitzboell's research in Afghanistan and Kosovo/a found positive evidence that large expatriate communities have a range of unintended economic consequences on their host systems, most of which have a negative effect on the host economy.[15] These effects may range from, but are not limited to, a rise in basic commodity prices, an increase in salary disparities and higher rates of unequal standards of living. Ammitzboell points out that peace operations may have a positive impact on the local economy by creating job opportunities and by increasing or creating a demand for certain services and goods, but cautions that this impact will not necessarily result in the enhancement of local infrastructures or capacities, as much of this additional demand is taken up by the international private sector. A large portion of this economic stimulation is linked to the temporary deployment of the peace operation and an influx of international assistance, and the positive economic impact that it has in the short-term can thus not be sustained.

Shin-wha Lee makes the point that humanitarian assistance in these contexts may also give a false sense of relief and distort the local economy, with possible negative unintended consequences.[16] Ammitzboell notes, for instance, how the provision of food assistance allow farmers the opportunity to turn to cash crops, some of which may be undesirable not only from a food-security perspective, such as with poppy-growing in the Afghanistan context.

Impact on local civil service

Ammitzboell recorded the effects of the 'brain-drain' phenomenon and the 'dual public sector syndrome' on the host public sector, both of which contribute to a dysfunctional and unreliable public sector. The perversity of this effect becomes even clearer when we take into consideration that it not only has a negative effect on the local economy, but it is in fact directly opposite to the effect the peace operation intends to have on the local public sector, which in most mandates are to build the capacity of the public sector and to support the extension of state control throughout the territory of the host state. Another example would be, as noted by Ammitzboell, the combination of weak local administrative capacity and the inflow of considerable amounts of aid and/or direct budgetary assistance, resulting in an increase in corruption by state officials.

Change in gender roles

Another aspect of the impact that the international community tends to have on a host society is the way in which international assistance programmes empowers certain types of individuals, for instance, those with Western language and cultural skills.

Another category that has become popular over the last decade is women who tend to be the focus of various types of 'empowerment' programmes by international aid organisations, and whom are often given preferential access to jobs, training and other economic and career opportunities. The intended consequences of these programmes are to have a positive impact on development and stability by empowering women to play a more assertive role in their society. The medium- to long-term effects of these initiatives are the subject of various studies, but Koyama and Myrttinen have identified some negative short-term consequences on women, for example, by inviting resentment against them within families and society in general for their newly gained economic independence and power, which in some cases may result in an increase in domestic violence.[17] They also point out that while such programmes may have a short-term and direct impact on the women involved, it takes longer for society to adapt and this may have further unintended consequences. If there is a sudden increase in the employment of women it may impact on their traditional roles at home, where women bear the disproportionate share of child-rearing and household work. It may, for instance, result in burden-shifting to younger children and the elderly.

15 K. Ammitzboell, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations on the host economy from a people's perspective', pp. 69-89, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.
16 Shin-wha Lee, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations on humanitarian action', pp. 90-108, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.
17 S. Koyama & H. Myrttinen, 'The unintended consequences of peace operations on Timor Leste from a gender perspective', in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

Koyama and Myrttinen's research into the Cambodian and Timorese cases touch on the direct link between the deployment of peacekeepers and the influx of aid workers, the growth of the local sex industry, and an increase in the number of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. They also note the link between a declining sex industry and the departure, or significant withdrawal, of a peace operation and the humanitarian aid community.

The impact on troop contributing countries

Peace operations give rise to a range of opportunities and costs for troop contributing countries (TCCs), be they financial, social or political, to which TCCs have responded in varying manners. Some of these opportunities and costs gave rise to unintended effects, some significant, some not as significant as is generally believed. For instance, there is a widely held perception that some developing countries contribute troops to UN peace operations because it is considered a 'financial opportunity' by both military institutions and individual troops. In Aning's study of Ghana,[18] financial gains from participation in peace operations for both individuals and the state seem substantial, while Sotomayor points to similar perceptions in Argentina and Uruguay. Murthy's chapter on India and Pakistan finds, however, that such gains did not constitute a significant

effect given the proportionally small number of units participating in peace operations in relation to the overall size of these armies.[19] In more than a few countries examined, participation in peace operations offered some opportunities for corruption to occur. Aning and Sotomayor discuss cases of corruption such as the manipulation of appointments to peace operations (where selection implies significant financial gain for individual soldiers and officers), and the misappropriation of funds received from the UN to reimburse countries for some of the costs of their participation in peace operations.

Integrating unintended consequences into the planning and managing of peace operations

Most of the research cited noted the importance of institutionalising accountability in peace operations. In the past, the weakness or lack of clarity in accountability mechanisms in itself created a 'permissive' environment within which unintended negative side-effects went unreported and therefore fell outside the realm of that which should be managed. When they did occur at such a scale that they could not be ignored they were usually managed as exceptional phenomena that require a temporary, once-off, response.

For example, Kent, Koyama and Myrttinen's findings indicate that peace operations

have not meaningfully anticipated the reality of sexual exploitation and abuse before the late 1990s, and that it is only half-way through the first decade of the 21st century that various steps to anticipate, prevent and manage sexual violence and abuse in UN peace operations have become institutionalised. Before these latest developments, peace operations rarely addressed enduring violence on women and girls, due to a lack of consciousness of the problem, the severity of the implications of the problem for all concerned, and most importantly a lack of institutional preparedness to identify, contain and manage the problem. There are very few examples of UN peace operations identifying, containing and managing unintended consequences outside of the sexual exploitation and abuse realm. It is thus not yet a widely understood, discounted and institutionalised phenomenon.

Planning

In order to improve our ability to manage complex peace operations, we need to improve our understanding of the dynamics of complex systems, including complex social systems. This article makes the point that unintended consequences are part of the natural feedback cycle of complex systems and cannot be avoided. However, we can improve our ability to anticipate, mitigate and discount specific potential negative unintended consequences, and in so doing,

18 K. Anning, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana', pp. 133-155, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.
19 C.S.R. Murthy, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from South Asia', pp. 156-70, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

improve the overall effectiveness of peace operations.

This knowledge leads us to the understanding that in a complex system unintended consequences should not come as a surprise. Once we realise and accept this fact, it follows that whenever we plan or undertake action in the complex peace operations context, we have to discount the potential unintended consequences of our actions.

As the system is dynamic and we can therefore not predict all the ways in which it may respond to our actions, it means that we have to anticipate that despite our best planning efforts, we will still not be able to foresee all the potential unintended consequences our actions can have. However, through research of past actions and by systematically thinking through the consequences our actions are likely to evoke, we should be able to significantly reduce some of the obvious negative consequences of the past. Anticipating the potential unintended consequences of our actions should thus become a standard aspect of our planning procedures and processes.

Real-time monitoring and evaluation

If we accept that despite our planning efforts some unintended consequences will still occur, then we should introduce, as standard practice, monitoring systems that can identify emerging unintended consequences, so that we can try to contain or counter their potential negative effects. In fact, peace operations should have monitoring systems in place to study whether the missions are having their desired effect on the system. If such systems are in place, an important sub-set of such systems should be the identification of any unintended consequences, especially negatives ones that may be emerging in response to our actions. The alertness to potential negative unintended consequences should thus be integrated into an overall awareness of the dynamic nature of the complex systems that peace operations are trying to influence. Such awareness should inform a willingness to continuously adapt the planning and management of peace operations, and its various aspects, to the way the system is responding to the peace intervention. Real-time monitoring and longer-term evaluation are tools that will assist those responsible for managing peace operations to detect, at the earliest opportunity, when unintended consequences occur.

The 'do no harm' approach

One methodology for anticipating unintended consequences that has been developed in the context of humanitarian assistance is the *Do No Harm*[20] approach. In short, this approach is built on the realisation that aid cannot be provided without becoming part of the wider conflict, and provides a model for planning, continuously monitoring and adjusting the effects of any assistance programme by identifying and downplaying the negative influences while at the same time identifying and encouraging the positive influences of the programme. It thus implies (a) recognising that unintended consequences will occur, (b) putting systems in place that will identify the effect one's action is having (both positive and negative), and (c) steering and refining that effect by countering potential negative effects and encouraging and modulating the positive unintended consequences towards the intended impact. It implies that one needs to understand that intervening in a complex system requires a continuous process of adjustment.

Unintended consequences that cannot be avoided

Through planning and monitoring efforts, like the *Do No Harm* approach or others, we are likely to identify unintended consequences that cannot be avoided if we want to continue to pursue a specific course of action. This implies that we may be faced with situations where we have to discount the potential negative consequences of our actions with the potential good that those same actions are intended to generate. This predicament is not unknown, and has been addressed before in the context of the *Double Effect* and *Just War* theories.

We do not intend repeating these theories here in detail, but the principle of dou-

---

20 M. B. Anderson (1999). *Do no Harm: How aid can support peace or war.* London: Lynne Rienner.

ble effect is a moral principle for assessing actions that produce side-effect harm that has wide-ranging utility. In short, it states that, although actors are responsible for the harmful side-effects that ensue from their actions, actions that produce harmful side-effects are nevertheless permissible provided that: (1) the primary goal of the action is legitimate; (2) the side-effects are not part of the actor's intended goal; (3) the side-effects are not a means to this goal; (4) the side-effects are permissible only if the actor aims to prevent or minimise them; and (5) no alternative courses of action could have been taken that would have led to fewer or no side-effects.[21]

There are thus existing theories and approaches that can assist us in developing practical means of containing and managing unintended consequences when they cannot be avoided altogether. However, we should always be cautious of overestimating our ability to 'manage' outcomes when dealing with complex systems. A further insight we need to gain from our study of complex systems is that managing the host system, in the sense of controlling it, is impossibly complex. Our definition of managing unintended consequences in the peace operations context is purposefully interacting with the system with the aim of continuously adjusting our actions to the feedback generated by

the system with a view to minimising any negative unintended consequences our interventions may have caused. When we talk of containing and managing unintended consequences the emphasis is thus on being alert to system feedback through institutionalised monitoring and evaluating mechanisms, and constantly adjusting our planning and operations accordingly.

Planning for peace operations can thus not rely on a 'fire-and-forget' planning model where a peace operation is planned prior to deployment, and then perhaps annually reviewed against the original plan, or in some cases only after the situation has fundamentally changed to the extent that significantly more troops are required. In the complex peace operations context each action result in the system responding in various ways that will require a range of further actions. The analogy most apt is that of steering a ship. Although the destination is known at the outset, and although it is possible to plan the journey in great detail, the actual voyage requires thousands of route adjustments, some minor some more significant, to reach the destination. The reality of peace operations is, however, even more complex in that the destination is a very broadly defined desired end state and the exact journey is unclear beyond the milestones contained in peace agreements, and these are typically unrealistic

political ideals formed by the need for compromise and mutual assurance, rather than realistically achievable timeframes. Managing complex peace operations thus necessitates an ongoing planning process that constantly monitors and evaluates the feedback generated by the system so that peace operation can continuously adjust its programmes or initiate new actions accordingly.

The accountability debate

The attempt to establish clear accountability in peace operations is hampered by two factors. One of them concerns *authority*, the issue of *to whom* a peace operation is accountable. The second issue concerns the *control* of the mission.

Hampson and Kihara-Hunt address accountability in the context of the responsibility to address criminal conduct or breaches of applicable disciplinary codes.[22] This relates to the 'control' of the mission issue through the management of the behaviour of individuals and it covers unintended consequences such as sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption, theft, etc. Mégret, on the other hand, addresses authority in the broader sense of unintended consequences caused by the actions or omissions of the mission itself,[23] and it covers the kind of unintended consequences addressed by Ammitzboell (economic consequences),

---

21 G. J. Rossouw, 'Business is not just war: implications for applying the principle of double effect to business', in L. Bomann-Larsen and O. Wiggen (eds), *Responsibility in World Business: Managing harmful side-effects of corporate activity*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2004, p.39.
22 F.J. Hampson and A. Kihara-Hunt, 'The accountability of personnel associated with peacekeeping operations', pp. 195-220, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.
23 F. Mégret, 'The vicarious responsibility of the United Nations', pp. 250-67, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

Shin-wa Lee (humanitarian consequences) and Gordon[24] (civil–military coordination consequences).

Who has authority over the mission?

For this latter category, the question of authority, or to whom a peace operation reports to, two models may be relevant, namely the delegation and participation models.[25] These models capture two separate potential accountability mechanisms. In the delegation model, power is exercised by those who are delegated with the authority to do so, making them accountable to those who delegate the power to them. In the participatory model, those in power are accountable to individuals in the polity. In the international sphere, different perceptions about accountability create tensions and conflicts. Whereas some perceive international organisations – such as the UN, World Bank, etc. – as reporting to their member governments (delegation model), others hold that these organisations' actions should be made accountable directly to the people who are affected by these organisations' actions (participation model).

Thus in the UN peace operation context,

some would argue that a peace operation is accountable to the UN Security Council, the body responsible for establishing and supervising the mission, while others would argue that a peace operations should be accountable to its host community, i.e. the people whom the peace operation are meant to assist. Mégret notes that there is a shift observable in various areas of governance from a 'shareholder' view of accountability to one emphasizing the importance of 'stakeholders'. Ideally, a peace operation should establish a balance between these two models, for neither seems sufficient ground for accountability by itself. Whereas the accountability of the peace operation to the UN Security Council, and indeed the UN General Assembly for budgetary matters, are established practice, mechanisms still need to be developed for meaningful host community participatory accountability.[26]

One such mechanism was addressed by Hoffman, in the form of the ombudsperson model, which provides us with one example of a mechanisms that may empower the local population to submit claims against the peace operation.[27] However, much more can and should be done to develop meaningful

accountability towards and by the host community, not just in the context of legal accountability related to some form of wrong doing – for which a range of practical recommendations has been made in the studies by Kent, Koyama and Myrttinen, Hampson and Kihara-Hunt, and Mégret – but also through ongoing and proactive political accountability. This can come about through a process of consultation and participation in order to, among others, seek advice and input from the host community on future plans and to receive and monitor feedback from the community on programmes being undertaken.[28]

One obvious question is who constitutes the host community? And one can respond that the host community should be represented through a range of institutions and mechanisms at all levels of society, and should include civil society. In a post-conflict context, which is the condition in which most peace missions operate, most of the official institutional positions and mechanisms will undergo considerable change under contested circumstances, and the peace operation would thus have to be resourceful in ensuring that the mechanisms it is

---

24 S. Gordon, 'Unintended Consequences of civil-military cooperation in peace operations', pp. 109-30, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

25 For a theorisation of these models in the context of international relations, see Ruth W. Grant and Robert O. Keohane, 'Accountability and abuses of power in world politics' in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 1, February 2005, pp. 29-44.

26 For one such attempt, see for instance the 'Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship', *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 29, March 2005, p. 7.

27 F.F. Hoffman, 'A beacon of light in the dark? The United Nations' experience with peace operations ombudspersons as illustrated by the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo/a', pp. 221-49, in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur, op. cit., footnote 2.

28 Note the February 2003 Rome Declaration on Harmonisation signed by 28 developing countries and 49 donor organisations. The four main principles highlighted in the Declaration are: recipient countries coordinate development assistance, donors align their aid with recipient countries' priorities and systems, donors streamline aid delivery and donors adopts policies, procedures and incentives that foster harmonisation. See www.aidharmonization.org

interacts with, or facilitates, reflect the broadest possible representation of popular will and opinion.[29] As Mégret points out, the challenge is no longer to determine whether the UN should be accountable, the challenge is now to determine what accountability means by examining the various options for accountability.

Who has control over the mission?

The other issue that hampers the establishment of clear accountability in international peace operations concerns the *control* of the mission, i.e. those who are responsible for the peace operation do not necessarily have effective control over the responsibility to address criminal conduct or breaches of applicable disciplinary codes of all the individuals that are perceived to be its employees.[30] The most obvious case in this context is the fact that personnel that are deployed as part of a military contingent to UN peace operations remain under the legal authority of the sending state when it comes to criminal and disciplinary issues. Although the conduct of these personnel are also governed by international humanitarian law, international human rights and other bodies of international law, these instruments need to be applied through the national legal systems of the troop contributing country. Hampson and Kihara-Hunt also discuss the full spectrum of other categories of UN peace opera-

tions personnel, including military observers, UN police, international civil servants, international and local UN staff, etc. and the various challenges related to the ensuring criminal and disciplinary accountability for these categories of personnel in the peace operations context.

Conclusion

We were struck by the absence of literature on, or even remotely related to, the phenomenon of unintended consequences. Most of the references that were available are anecdotal. Our recommendation is thus to encourage further research into the unintended consequences of peacekeeping.

However, even within the scope of the limited research undertaken into this topic, and to which our study is a modest contribution, it has become clear that unintended consequences is an important, yet neglected subject. It is an important subject because some of the unintended consequences that come about in the context of peace operations are morally and ethically unacceptable, while others can seriously hamper a mission's capacity to achieve its mandate. In fact, we have seen that some unintended consequences can question the value of peace operations itself, while others have brought sending institutions, like the United Nations, into disrepute and have been ma-

jor drivers for reform and calls for greater accountability within these international organisations.

Those responsible for the planning, managing and supervision of peace operations need to recognise that unintended consequences are a natural consequence of the complex dynamic nature of complex systems. As such, all peace operations should develop the capacity to identify, contain and manage unintended consequences. This implies that the United Nations and other institutions that undertake peace operations need to develop institutional mechanisms for addressing unintended consequences, and should institutionalise planning, real-time monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that will enable it to anticipate and respond to emerging unintended consequences.

The overriding message of this article is that we can no longer pretend that these side effects do not occur, or that when they do, that they are exceptional phenomena. An awareness of and sensitivity to unintended consequences should be integrated into the routine management processes of UN and other peace operations, so that they can be proactively prevented, contained or managed as part of the normal day-to-day reality of complex peace operations.

---

29 See the report of the 'Building Effective Partnerships Conference: Improving the Relationship between Internal and External Actors in Post-Conflict Countries', 7 October 2004 available at www.ipa.org
30 Issues concerning the control of power in international relations are discussed in Grant and Keohane, op. cit., footnote 24, pp. 37-8.