CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE UN PEACE OPERATION

The fullest perspective on peacekeeping . . . is one which places it firmly in the context of international politics.

--- James (1990: 13–14)

Peace operations are largely synonymous with peacekeeping. It can be defined as in-country operations that are authorised by a multilateral body, that are multinational in their composition, that have a substantial military or police component, and that are deployed in support of a peace process or conflict management objective. Yet not every peace operation deployed with a conflict management objective need have a substantial uniformed component. And every military peacekeeping operation is inherently political, doomed to stagnation or ultimate failure in the absence of an effective political process.

The processes of globalisation are transforming global politics from an activity primarily involving states to one characterised by transnational relations between different types of politically significant actors which are connected by potentially global communications. Both the theory and practice of peace operations have been indelibly shaped by this changing global context. Initially, peacekeeping was concerned chiefly with creating the conditions for the peaceful settlement of disputes between states. This approach to peacekeeping is most closely associated with a Westphalian approach and 'traditional peacekeeping'. On the other

hand, new post-Westphalian conceptions of liberal peace insist that, because liberal democratic states are peaceful in their relations with one another, peace operations need to be in the business of fostering and maintaining a world order based on liberal democracy. Buttressing these claims are shifting conceptions of sovereignty.

Whereas the Westphalian order rested on a notion of sovereignty that granted states protection from interference by outsiders, the post-Westphalian account is based on the notion of 'sovereignty as responsibility' – the idea that sovereigns enjoy the right to non-interference only insofar as they protect the fundamental rights of their citizens. Today, this post-Westphalian account is in the ascendancy but continues to be resisted by those who believe that it risks undermining sovereignty and, in turn, international peace and security itself. Many of today's debates about the nature and direction of peace operations can be traced back to these two very different conceptions of world order and the different roles accorded to peace operations by each of them.

The post-Westphalian conception has become more popular since the end of the Cold War. In their design, most contemporary peace operations go well beyond the parameters set out by the Westphalian conception and interfere in many aspects of domestic political life. As a result, peace operations tend to be larger and more complex than in the past. What is more, in 2005, the UN General Assembly formally endorsed the idea that states have a responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide and mass killing and that, when they failed to do so, this responsibility gets transferred to the UN. It is important, however, to bear in mind that the Westphalian account continues to hold sway among many post-colonial states, which fear that the new approach erodes their right to determine their own path and opens the door to the interference of greater powers in their domestic affairs.

The Post-Cold War Scenario

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a dramatic change in the number and the nature of UN peace operations.

While the number of peace operations has increased, the nature of these operations has also evolved from traditional peacekeeping to multidimensional peacekeeping. There are two main reasons for that evolution: Firstly, it is conventionally assumed that the end of the Cold War explains the transformation of peace operations. At the end of the Cold War, the bipolar world collapsed and it gave smaller states greater freedom to fight without great power interference and permitted the resolution of a number of existing conflicts that had been fuelled by the rivalry between the superpowers. It can partly be argued that the end of the Cold War caused a number of conflicts, yet there is something missing from this explanation of the transformation. The end of the Cold War cannot explain the evolution of UN peace operations in itself.

Secondly, in order to see a fuller picture, we need to take the acceleration in the globalisation of the market economy, democracy and human rights into account. Today's world is shaped by globalisation. As globalisation can be understood as an uneven set of processes that affects all areas of human activity, not just the economy.

Three developments link this acceleration to the transformation of the UN peace operations: (1) the introduction of economic and political conditionality in Western development and assistance programmes served to generate a demand for peace operations by contributing to state collapse and the outbreak of armed conflicts in the Third World, (2) The change in norms that made it possible to launch peace operations in support of human rights and democracy served to increase the supply of peace operations aimed at promoting these goals, and (3) The intense media coverage of human rights violations and atrocities generated intervention pressures that also had the effect of increasing the supply of peace operations aimed at promoting democracy and humanitarian objectives.

Thirdly, culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflicts in the post-cold-war world. According to Samuel Huntington, "People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups, tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level

civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against."[1]

The above-stated factors put political limitations not only on the UN but also on all sovereign states, who have to pursue their perceived national interests. As such, peace operations are conflicts that are largely affected by these conditions.

Referring to the crisis of Sudan, the basic cause of conflicts is between Arabic-Islamism and secular Animism. Deng writes, "The ideological assimilations of Arabisation and Islamisation" that favours the Arab religion and culture over the African religions and cultures in a national constitution of state is the basic issue that causes political crisis between the Arab Muslims of North and African Christians and Animists of South".[2]

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[1] See Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilisations and the remaking of World Order

[2] Francis Mading Deng(1995) War of Visions, Conflict of Identities, in the Sudan, Washington DC: p.12, Brookings Institute

While handling peace operations, these factors have to be very carefully considered by the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force). At the same time, it has to handle state/not state spoilers who may be politically for or against one of the clashing groups or states.

It is pertinent here to examine the Bosnian crisis and its political dimensions. The Bosnian crisis was predominantly religious. The pulls and preserves of varying religious political groups not only delayed the process of peacemaking but even accelerated it. In this crisis Russians provided diplomatic support to the Serbs. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Libya provided funds and arms to the Bosnians; not for reasons of ideology or power politics or economic interest but because of cultural kinship. The United States had to actively come into the picture due to the pressure from Saudi Arabia and there were other international political compulsions driving the United States.

International peacekeeping has undergone dramatic changes since the end of the Cold War. There has been not only an unprecedented increase in the number of United Nations peace operations, but also dramatic changes have occurred in the

demand and supply of peace operations. The end of the Cold War also facilitated the rise in the supply of peace-keeping operations by removing the Soviet threat to the West, thereby enabling the Western states to devote more resources to peace operations. Additionally, the reason for heavy demand is because the success of an ambitious operation in Namibia, and a certain sense of triumph emanating from the Gulf War all injected a new feeling of confidence in the UN, thereby creating enlarged expectations about what the organization could accomplish. The reasons for such a heavy demand to deal with wars, civil strife and other crises are numerous and persuasive.

First, the impressive record of the UN in the years 1987-92 has raised expectations. The UN has contributed to the settlement of numerous regional conflicts, including the Iran-Iraq War, the South African presence in Namibia, the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. It provided a framework for the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait. Second, given a choice, states contemplating the use of force beyond their borders often prefer to do it in a multilateral, especially in the UN context. A multilateral approach helps

neutralise domestic political opposition, increases the opportunities to acquire useful allies, reassures the in Indian Peace Keeping Force international community that operations have limited and legitimate goals and reduces the risks of large-scale force being used by adversaries or rival powers. Third, the UN has some notable advantages over regional organisations in tackling security problems: it is universal; it has a reputation, even if it is now under threat, for impartiality; and it has a more clear set of arrangements for making decisions on security issues than do most regional organizations, including even the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On the other hand, if we look at the dramatic changes in the nature of UN peace operations, it can be argued that while traditional peacekeeping had focused mainly on monitoring ceasefires, today's complex peace operations are very different. The UN peacekeeping operations came to involve more non-military elements to ensure their sustainability. UN peace operations today are no longer purely military. Since the end of the Cold War, emphasis on the militaristic peace-keeping operations has changed and now they frequently contain civilian aspects.

Theory of Sovereignty and the Peace Operations

Peace operations were initially conceived as a tool for maintaining order between states in an international society based on rules arising from state sovereignty, especially non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. We label this context the 'Westphalian' society of states. Within this society, the principal role of peace operations was the facilitation of peaceful settlements *between* states. As globalization has gathered pace, so the relationships between states and societies have deepened, casting doubt on the political significance of state boundaries and giving rise to new ideas about sovereignty. According to these new ideas, states enjoy full sovereign rights only if they fulfill certain responsibilities towards their citizens, such as protecting them from genocide and mass labelled atrocities. Within this conception of international society, which is labelled as 'post-Westphalian', the role of peace operations is to assist states in fulfilling these responsibilities and, where necessary, to assume those responsibilities when the host state proves itself unable or unwilling to do so. Although this conception has come into ascendancy and informs the majority of contemporary UN peace

operations, it remains highly controversial. It is resisted by some sovereign states of the Global South, who continue to defend the Westphalian order.

The Westphalian order takes its name from the Westphalian settlements concluded at the end of Europe's Thirty Years' War (1618–48), which took place between the 'Union' of Protestant German princes and free cities and the 'League' of their Catholic counterparts. Politically, the treaties recognised the territorial sovereignty of the approximately 300 states and statelets within Europe.

After the Second World War, the Westphalian order expanded to cover the entire globe, as former colonies sought to take their place as sovereign states. With decolonization and the expansion of the Westphalian order, therefore, came calls to protect the sanctity of state sovereignty through law. For the leaders of many post-colonial states, there was a direct relationship between a people's right freely to determine its political status and the noninterference rule. After all, they argued, there could be no right

of national self-determination if powerful states felt entitled to interfere in the affairs of the weak states.

It was in the context of a pre-eminent Westphalian order that peace operations originated and developed. Westphalian-style peace operations are concerned primarily with the peaceful resolution of disputes between states but might also assist states in the suppression of separatist movements or in the building of state capacity. Upholding and protecting Westphalian values, however, such operations acted only with the consent of the sovereign states involved and sought merely to create the conditions necessary to facilitate the resolution of conflicts by state parties. But since the end of the Cold War the Westphalian order – and its attendant conception of peace operations – has come under challenge from processes of globalization and changing ideas about the meaning of sovereignty.

This post-Westphalian understanding of international society holds that states receive their sovereign rights only if they fulfill their responsibilities to their citizens, chief among them the protection of civilians from arbitrary killing. This implies a very

different role for peace operations to that envisaged by the Westphalian conception of international society. According to the post-Westphalian perspective, peace operations need to be in the business of protecting human rights where host states prove unwilling or unable to do so, and of helping to build states capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in the long term.

Today's world is shaped by contemporary globalization, which has facilitated important challenges to the Westphalian order. Events that happen in one part of the world invariably impact on others – be that through flows of refugees and migrants, trade (both legal and illicit) or communication. Such connectivity has given rise to the argument that international society as a whole has a 'responsibility to protect' individuals from grave breaches of their human rights in situations where their own state is either unwilling or unable to do so. This has prompted a radical rethinking of the meaning of sovereignty.

In reality, this 'old orthodoxy' [traditional sovereignty] was never absolute. The Charter, after all, was issued in the name of the 'the peoples', not the governments, of the United Nations. Its

aim is not only to preserve international peace – vitally important though that is – but also 'to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person'. The Charter protects the sovereignty of peoples. It was never meant as a license for governments to trample on human rights and human dignity. Sovereignty implies responsibility, not just power. Can we really afford to let each state be the judge of its own right, or duty, to intervene in another state's internal conflict?

The issue of sovereignty to include responsibility has prompted protracted and ongoing debate about the proper role of peace operations in world politics. Many states and other actors continue to argue that the principles of Westphalian international society ought to be privileged and should temper the commitment to liberal peace that informs most contemporary peace operations. Stable peace, they argue, can only be achieved by creating space and institutions for states to resolve their differences peacefully on the basis of consent and mutual respect for the principle of non-interference.

In contrast, the post-Westphalian view holds that states have responsibilities to their citizens, instability in one state is likely to destabilize others, and individual states are accountable to international society. International society, in turn, has a responsibility to assist and – if needs be – force states to fulfill their responsibilities. Because liberal democratic polities tend to be better at protecting their citizens from genocide and mass killing, as well as settling their disputes with other democracies without resorting to war, peace operations should be in the business of rebuilding war-shattered societies along liberal democratic lines. Only in this way can stable peace be assured, because the Westphalian conception does nothing to tackle the underlying causes of war, such as injustice, human rights abuse and poverty. Although the post-Westphalian conception is certainly in the ascendancy, it remains controversial, with the result that the place of peace operations in world politics and its future trajectory remains contested, inconsistent, unpredictable and uncertain.

All Peace Operations are Political

Peace operations should be designed according to the particularities of the peace process or conflict management objective they are to support, with maximum flexibility and scope for innovation. Since the needs of the situation will evolve, although not always in positive directions, the mission should be continuously reassessed and reconfigured as necessary. Functions which can achieve their objective in the short-term, which it is to be hoped will include the military contribution to stabilization, should not be unduly prolonged.

Strong international political will has mostly left much to be desired in most of the peace operations, whether Yugoslavia or Sudan that has escalated and prolonged the crisis. Jamal K Adams says, "Implicit in this statement in the idea that the international powers of the world are far less involved than they could and should be".[3]

Peacebuilding functions need to be planned in a realistic, longer time-frame. At all times the mission needs to be governed

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[3] Jamal K Adams, History of the conflict in Sudan and the role of the U.N. EDGE, Professor Lusignan, Dec 3, 2004

by a political strategy aiming to bring together all aspects of the international engagement to promote sustainable peace.

From the signing of a peace agreement and the decision for a Security Council mandate, to planning and implementation, UN peacekeeping operations are simultaneously reliant on and support a series of political processes to facilitate long-term peace. A credible military presence and political processes reinforce each other operationally and ultimately the utility of UN peacekeeping operations correlates to the political progress they contribute to. Striking the adequate balance between stability activities and enabling political reconciliation in a post conflict situation is no easy task and always context specific, but is a crucial determinant for a successful operation and its ultimate withdrawal.

That military peacekeeping is never a substitute for an effective political process was a central lesson of the Brahimi Report, but this principle has fallen from focus in several large-scale UN peacekeeping contexts. The failure or suspension of political processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Georgia and Somalia have had detrimental impact on security

situations on the ground and the resultant strategic uncertainty has placed strain on headquarters and contributing country resources. Further, the failure to engender domestic political processes has delayed the transfer of responsibilities from costly military peacekeeping to other, 'lighter' peacebuilding presences.

The relationship between Peacekeeping and Politics-conflicts are triggered by political factors, and short of outright victory for one side, political processes must always be the means to solve them. In the context of peacekeeping operations, a 'political process' evolves over time and can come in a number of different forms: it may include ongoing contacts between parties to a peace agreement; a democratic process involving elections or the approval of a constitution; or regional and international contacts on the status of a contested territory. Across the range of circumstances, it is important that the ultimate goal of an intervention be aimed at building the domestic ability to lead and manage sustainable political processes after war's end. However, rogue actors, spoilers and sudden shocks can test even the strongest political settlement.

Insulating and sustaining one or more political processes are the key functions of UN peacekeeping operations. The UN's field presences serve this role by providing transitional security for the consolidation of peace agreements and national political process; supporting those political processes through facilitation and substantive support and; reducing the risk of recourse to arms by demobilizing forces and helping national authorities articulate the rule of law.

To perform their political functions effectively, the UN peacekeeping operations need a variety of resources. First, they need strong political teams backstopping the political functions of mission leadership; Second, they need effective substantive support from headquarters from not only DPKO, but also the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and other parts of the UN system; Third, because all politics is local, a peacekeeping operation needs effective political presence outside of capitals and in the surrounding region. The role of neighbouring states is very important. The UN has not yet developed clear method to control the fuelling neighbours. In case of Sudan, Don Petterson writes, "The SPLA also found itself strengthening in the south due to

support from neighbouring Eritria in addition to Ethopia and Uganda.[4] Fourth, missions need to be equipped with a mechanism that allows for using budgeted funds toward political activities, especially as regards capacity building, and; Fifth, they need appropriately equipped force contingents able to interpret and adapt to local political conditions with a mandate to protect the political process. This is most difficult – even well-led force contingents are frequently deployed without adequate situation awareness or local political knowledge.

In many cases, peacekeeping 'success' depends heavily on the ability of a mission's civilian leadership (in most situations the Special Representatives of the Secretary General) to alter the goals of warring parties and stimulate political progress. Indeed, from Namibia to Cambodia and Timor Leste, SRSGs (Special Representative of The Secretary-general) with a strong grasp of the conflict dynamics were able to employ political mediation tactics to capitalise on the communication space provided by military

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[4] Don Petterson, Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict and Catastrophe. p.223

peacekeeping, taking the 'force out of politics.' Unfortunately, finding the right person for the job tends to be quite difficult.

Most of all, the UN field presences need to be linked to and supported by broader political Special Representative of The Secretary-general mechanisms, at the Security Council and beyond, that reinforce their political role and bring weight and authority to bear on the UN messages. Consolidating national political stability also often means corralling regional political actors – a task not often suitable for heads of missions, but one that must be closely coordinated with them Further, when considering whether to deploy at all, the Security Council should keep in mind that the most effective political strategies for concluding conflicts may be implemented through mechanisms other than a peace operation.

Consent of Parties -- The Central Political Challenge

The political challenges for UN peacekeeping largely emerge from the principle of consent and how it is applied in modern peace-keeping operations. Consent by the host, warring parties

and the international community, along with impartiality and non-use of force, is a longstanding core principle of UN peacekeeping doctrine, derived from Cold War operations – reaffirmed in DPKO's 2008 "principles and guidelines".

Yet recent Security Council mandates have grown increasingly ambitious, especially around the use of force, and peacekeepers are deployed in theaters where they cannot expect the consent of all parties, where there is often 'no peace to keep.' This has, in some circumstances, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and potentially Somalia, set UN missions on collision courses with rebel/splinter groups with substantial external backing who are left out of political processes. To deal with such spoilers, a UN peacekeeping mission need not only be equipped with the military credibility to protect the peace process, but also must have sufficient resources to properly respond politically to these pressures.

The lack of consent by host states themselves presents an even larger problem. Some UN missions have had to operate in the face of explicit withdrawals of consent by governments, as recently

in Ethiopia/Eritrea. Others have had to contend with constraints on their actions as a price for continued consent, as in Darfur and Chad. In such cases where a lack of consent yields the absence of viable political frameworks, UN peacekeeping missions have been deployed with high expectations but with little prospect of supporting long-term settlement of the conflict. Full consent need not be a determinant of success of an operation - but its absence certainly adds to the challenge, the complexity and the likelihood of failure.

Even after giving consent, local governments, like in Sudan have been engaging in gross violations of peace as reported by Amnesty International, "While international players are supposedly working to improve matters, the local governments seems to become increasingly committed to spurring chaos".[5]

This is a political problem that goes to the heart of UN peacekeeping. It highlights divisions between states that emphasise the importance of sovereignty (including major troop contributors) and those that tend to give precedence to

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[5] http://news.amnesty.org/pages/sudan, 'Civilians under threat in Darfur:

humanitarian concerns and human rights. The consequence of consent-less peacekeeping is that the UN has recently found itself in a strategic muddle, operating neither in an enforcement mode nor with a political basis for consent-based peacekeeping and peace building.

Consent of the parties for intervention was inevitable for traditional peacekeepers. But opinions are changing on both political and legal necessity of consent of parties. We have lately seen number of examples of intervention into the domestic affairs of states beyond the consent of governments. Intervention is increasingly perceived as legitimate to halt violence in civil wars that have broken out since the end of the Cold War.

The dynamics of ethnic and religious conflicts as we have seen in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda are very different from the interstate conflicts, during the cold war era which the UN had involved during the Cold War. In previous conflicts reasons of the conflict and the parties were more clearly defined, and when they agreed to a cease-fire, the UN Blue Helmets knew how to operate. However, in ethnic conflicts, reasons of the conflicts and parties

are more complex and difficult to identify. In many of these cases, there has not been any legitimate government to obtain consent, nor any effective ceasefire and clear-cut front lines. In such an unstable and uncertain environment, the reliability of sacrosanct principle of consensus is very much deluded as an operational basis for peacekeeping. The experience of the UN in Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia and Haiti clearly demonstrated that within the context of intra-state and ethnic conflicts, strict adherence to the normative principles of consent, impartiality and non-use of force except in self defense substantially reduces the operational efficiency of a peacekeeping force. Even with that end of hostilities after consent, the winning government of the conflicting group starts feeling that UN presence is enough. As pointed by Christian Stack, "In the second phase of consolidation and reconstruction, the UN can come to be perceived by the unwilling government as a demanding task master who keeps calling for reforms which are often politically difficult and generally uncomfortable".[6] The most important conclusion that we can drove from these examples is that Article 2(7) i.e., -non-intervention to

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[6] Christian Stack, 'New Horizons and old Problems for UN Peace Keeping', 7th July Berlin, University Erlangen-Nuenmberg (documentation from the expert workshop)

domestic affairs- became almost meaningless in the post Cold War era. The recent crisis in South Sudan reflects the weakness of consolidation and reconstruction.

Humanitarian Intervention

The challenge to the non-intervention norm is also motivated by humanitarian concerns about the increasing violence and pain in the chaotic environment of the international conflicts. Humanitarian emergencies, by causing the mass exodus of people -refugees escaping to neighboring countries- may constitute threats to international peace and security, or aggravate existing threats; conversely, disturbances of peace may give rise to humanitarian crises.

Today, humanitarian assistance has become, an integral part of establishing peace and security in various trouble spots in a way that was never the case before. It aims to not only providing access to the suffering people, but also building bridges between parties in conflict. The bases of this assistance must be humanity, neutrality and impartiality. The provision of assistance to the

victims of war is a difficult task since one party or the other invariably sees humanitarian assistance as a form of external intervention. At the same time, as internal wars came to dominate the statistics of warfare, and the international community seeks to cope with its responsibilities under humanitarian law in these assistance, national sovereignty, and military involvement become intermingled in a complex way. Combining aid with enforcement on the other hand, raises sensitive issues that call into question the role of humanitarian organizations and the desirability of intervention.

While the UN deluded all the previous normative principles such as non-intervention and national sovereignty, it intervened in several civil wars in the name of humanitarian assistance, protection of human rights or preventing conflicts from spreading neighboring countries and threatening international peace and security, the UN could not be successful entirely. The credibility of the UN was seriously damaged in former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda. It failed to rescue people from desperate circumstances. There was suspicion aroused about the impartiality of the peacekeepers, and the UN's legitimacy was certainly eroded.

Beside the loss of confidence in the UN as a security organization, the UN is also experiencing the deepest financial crisis in its history. Many of the SC's decisions on conflict resolution lack either the legal and political strength to make them respected, or the means to implement them in an effective way. After a brief post-Cold War honeymoon, the UN has once again suffered from the inability to enforce its decisions in critical situations, this time without the excuse of the obstacles created by the Cold War. The UN has failed in most of its operations after the Cold War, because of the lack of sufficient equipment, resources, and machinery to deal with new kind of conflicts. Existing procedures make it difficult to mobilise peacekeeping contingents and to move them swiftly to operational areas. It is obvious that the UN operations in peace-keeping field have to be re-organized.

Role of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UN

Overview

The Department of Political Affairs plays a central role in United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve deadly conflict

around the world. Established in 1992, the DPA is the lead U.N. department for peacemaking and preventive diplomacy.

The DPA monitors and assesses global political developments with an eye to detecting potential crises before they escalate, and devising effective responses. The Department provides close support to the Secretary-General and his envoys, as well as to the UN political missions deployed to areas of tension around the world with mandates to help defuse crises or promote lasting solutions to conflict.

With the support of the UN member states, the DPA is evolving into a more mobile and agile platform for crisis response, capable of rapidly deploying mediators and other peacemaking expertise to the field and cooperating more closely with regional organizations at the frontlines of conflicts.

The Department has other important functions that also contribute directly to the UN efforts to promote peace and prevent conflict. These include the DPA's role in coordinating the United

Nations electoral assistance activities, and in providing staff support to the UN Security Council and other bodies.

Where the Secretary-General's diplomatic "good offices" are employed to help bring warring parties toward peace or to prevent political and armed conflicts from escalating, the DPA is typically working behind the scenes to define and plan the mission and to provide guidance and backing to mediators. Where the UN peace-keepers are deployed, it is often after a successful peace-making effort involving or supported by the United Nations.

Political Analysis

Effective policy responses begin with sound and timely information and analysis, on having a pulse on events as they develop. Primarily through the work of its regional divisions, the DPA monitors developments and provides the Secretary-General with analytical reports and briefing notes to inform his decisions and shape his continuous diplomacy with the UN member states, regional and non-governmental organizations and other actors. Senior DPA officials are called on frequently to brief the United

Nations Security Council on global political developments, the status of UN peace-making efforts and the activities of the UN political missions in the field.

Electoral Assistance

The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and head of DPA is also the focal point for electoral assistance by the United Nations, evaluating requests from member-states and ensuring consistency in the delivery of assistance by the various UN agencies and departments involved. This is a growing area of responsibility and expertise, as elections occupy an important place in peace processes and political transitions aimed at ending bloodshed or at establishing or restoring democratic governance.

Servicing the Security Council and Other UN Bodies

In carrying out its crucial functions, the United Nations Security Council relies on staff of the Department of Political Affairs for both substantive and secretariat support. DPA provides similar staff support to two standing committees

established by the General Assembly, concerning the Rights of the Palestinian People and Decolonization.

Since 2009, the Department houses the secretariat of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which coordinates UN actions to implement the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy.