

Peace-support operations

Conflict prevention

Conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement rarely occur in a linear or sequential way. Instead, they are mutually reinforcing and the boundaries between them have become increasingly blurred. Used piecemeal or in isolation, they fail to provide the comprehensive approach required to address the root causes of conflict that, thereby, reduces the risk of conflict recurring.

Conflict prevention involves the application of structural or diplomatic measures to keep intra-state or inter-state tensions and disputes from escalating into violent conflict. Ideally, it should build on structured early warning, information gathering and a careful analysis of the factors driving the conflict. Conflict prevention activities may include the use of the UN Secretary-General's "good offices," preventive deployment or confidence-building measures.

Peace enforcement

Peace enforcement involves the application, with the authorization of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force.

Such actions are authorized to restore international peace and security in situations where the Security Council has determined the existence of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression.

The Security Council may utilize, where appropriate, regional organization and agencies for enforcement action under its authority and in accordance with the UN Charter. It should not be confused with peacekeeping though.

Peace enforcement does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorized by the Security Council.

Peacemaking

Peacemaking generally includes measures to address conflicts in progress and usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement.

The United Nations Secretary-General, upon the request of the Security Council or the General Assembly or at his or her own initiative, may exercise his or her "good offices" to facilitate the resolution of the conflict.

Peacemakers may also be envoys, governments, groups of states, regional organizations or the United Nations. Peacemaking efforts may also be undertaken by unofficial and non-governmental groups, or by a prominent personality working independently.

Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping is a technique designed to preserve the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers.

Over the years, peacekeeping has evolved from a primarily military model of observing cease-fires and the separation of forces after inter-state wars, to incorporate a complex model of many elements – military, police and civilian – working together to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace.

Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.

There are three basic principles that continue to set UN peacekeeping operations apart as a tool for maintaining international peace and security 1) Consent of the parties, 2) Impartiality, 3) Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Peacebuilding

The boundaries between conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement have become increasingly blurred. Peace operations are rarely limited to one type of activity.

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace. It works by addressing the deep-rooted, structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner. Peacebuilding measures address core issues that effect the functioning of society and the State, and seek to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions.

Sources:

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines (2008)

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>