

Efficacy of Lessons Learnt and Best Practices in United Nations Training

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) finds itself involved in varied circumstances in present times. This necessitates increased emphasis on evolution of employment doctrine, instructions and training methodology. Drawing on lessons of history has always been considered a wise course of action while preparing for future, and in the same vein, UN Integrated Training Service (UNITS) also opted to tap into past experiences. In order to improve performance as well as to keep their contingents out of harm's way the member states started to clamor for sharing of lessons learnt from previous missions within the community of peacekeepers, and to learn from an easily accessible repository of best practices which produced the best results. This article aims to analyze the whole process of revamping at UN headquarters level with a view to coming up with workable solutions to make it even better. It argues that pre-induction training institutions have been kept largely out of the loop, while relying entirely on post-induction training. A section on Lessons Learnt and Best Practices is also markedly absent from latest Core Pre-Induction Training Material (CPTM) / Specialized Training Material (STM) issued by UNITS. With lack of prior training and pre-occupation with their primary functions in the mission area, dedicated implementation of the policy at best becomes questionable. The article further identifies that the UNITS has mostly remained limited to available analytical reviews of its past operations which in turn have remained limited in scope to strategic level. Despite identifying this peculiarity, no attempt has been made to constitute special committees to review past mission experiences broken into individual, tactical and operational lessons and best practices. This reflects on the need to carry thorough review of the latest policy, following which the UN would be able to quickly remedy the shortfalls and thus be in a position to take on new challenges in a befitting manner. In this vein, the paper aims to establish and emphasize the potential to learn from the available best practices in terms of UN missions.

Keywords

United Nations, Peacekeeping Missions, UN Integrated Training Service, best practices

Introduction

United Nations Integrated Training Service (UNITS) issued its latest training policy in 2015 through which it attempted to enrich its training efforts with lessons learnt and best practices based on its achievements in previous missions. Ever changing international environment necessitates an integrated UN response capable of not only

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overcoming its internal shortcomings but also of being able to meet new challenges. Within this context, this paper aims to explicate the process of UNITS' revamping at UN headquarters level. In addition, it also analyzes the efficacy of lessons learnt and best practices in UN training system with a view to recommending changes to make the policy more wholesome.

The article is divided into five distinct sections which logically cut across important factors impacting upon efficacy of lessons learnt and best practices in UN training system. First section is dedicated to tracing history of UN's peacekeeping operations with emphasis on its changing nature. Environment necessitating this change, its relationship with world politics and consequent shift of UN operations from more benign traditional approach towards a more robust military leaning tendencies have been discussed. This brings up the issue of legality of intervention and the diversity of world opinion in case of each conflict; the diversity seriously hampers member nation's willingness to contribute as it impinges upon their national policies. Similarly dynamics of alliance for collective defense have their own inclinations. In the second section three examples of past UN missions have been cited. The section reflects on internationally recognized reviews of these missions in order to draw pertinent conclusions. It is consequently argued that whereas strategic inadequacies have been addressed to some extent, little attention has been paid to framing comprehensive analyses at individual, tactical and operational levels.

The next two sections look into the diversity among troop contributing countries and present a brief history of establishment of UNITS. Even though the list of troop contributing nations is long and spread over 122 countries, most of advanced nations do not choose to contribute in substantial numbers. This means that the UN has to rely predominantly on Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Bangladesh; the top three contributors as of May 2019. With such diverse military doctrines, equipment and training levels, it becomes increasingly challenging for countries and their respective leaderships to produce results with integrated contingents. The inoperability of equipment and weapon systems, intelligence gathering, and communication systems further create an operational dilemma. Furthermore, maintaining such diverse equipment in operations creates problems for logisticians. To overcome these problems and to respond to scathing criticisms, the UNITS came up with a strategy to fill this void. It has itself been evolving over the years and trying to remain abreast with ever-changing requirements. A brief look into its evolution and struggles resulting into its latest training policy is thus explained in detail.

The last two sections are the crux of this article as they deal with the concept of best practices and lessons learnt, followed by an in-depth analysis. It reveals that despite passage of significant time, allocated resources and efforts, the new policy still falls short of ideal. Seven important shortcomings have been identified along with suggested solutions to obviate these drawbacks.

UN Peacekeeping Operations at a Glance

The United Nations Organization (UNO) succeeded the League of Nations on October 24, 1945. The League of Nations was created to facilitate peaceful resolution of territorial disputes. Its duties included 'monitoring or reporting and investigation or supervision, the separation of opposing forces, establishment of neutral zones between parties, confirming implementation of mandates formed by the League Council, and lastly, administering transfer of territory between parties' (Daniel, Hayes, & Oudraat, 1999, p.7). The League failed in its stated mission when countries started to attack each

other in their quest for expansion. And thus after the League's final operation in 1934, the Second World War started. The UN was born when the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC); including the United States (US), Britain, France, China, and Russia, ratified the Charter. The membership originally included 51 nations but later on increasing to currently include 193 sovereign states.

UN peacekeeping has continuously evolved with changing environment since its beginning in 1945. Initially, like its predecessor, peacekeeping was limited to observer missions as was evident in its first four operations, which occurred between 1947 and 1949. Later in 1956, Dag Hammarskjold, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations created the first UN peacekeeping force in response to the Suez Canal crisis, and the UN dispatched 6000 soldiers with the mandate of self-defense only. This type of involvement in a peacekeeping situation characterized the missions up until 1978 and is often referred to as traditional peacekeeping (Schanbel & Thakur, 2001). These traditional peacekeeping missions had several distinguishing features such as;

- Consent and cooperation of parties to the conflict;
- International support, as well as support of the UNSC;
- UN command and control;
- Multinational composition of operations;
- No use of force;
- Neutrality of UN military between rival armies;
- Political impartiality of the UN in relationships with rival states.

The nuclear bombing of Japan by the US in August, 1945 and subsequent rivalry between then USSR and US started to encourage states away from UN and towards a system of collective defense through alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw pact. Presence of effects of Cold War between the two super powers were also felt inside the UN and for a considerable length of time peacekeeping operations did not pass through UN. While some of these missions were successful, and others were not, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) Group in Sinai and the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka qualify as two examples of these types of missions. Many of these missions had similar characteristics to traditional UN peacekeeping i.e. passivity and neutrality.

With end of the Cold War, the traditional rivalries between the super powers were somewhat abated and it consequently gave rise to unprecedented cooperation within the Security Council. In mid-1994, at the peak of UN peacekeeping, there were 17 operations, which involved more than 87,000 people. In post-Cold War era, the UN was confronted with a new set of crises. Prior to 1990s, most conflicts were interstate where two clear rivals were evident and United Nations was to create an environment of peace between the two across a recognized international border. However, following the end of the Cold War, another threat emerged; that of an intrastate conflict where boundaries and jurisdiction blurred and so did the recognizable belligerents. States were collapsing and there was violence at an unprecedented scale. Genocide and rape were used as weapons of war resulting into humanitarian tragedies, such as; food crisis, mass migrations and consequent refugee crises (Daniel, Hayes, & Oudraat, 1999). Keeping in view the changing circumstances, following types of tasks characterized peacekeeping operations in this post-Cold War era;

- Military disengagement, demobilization, and cantonment.
- Human rights monitoring and enforcement.
- Information dissemination.
- Policing, observation, organization, and conducting of elections.
- Rehabilitation and repatriation.
- Administration.
- Overseeing regional or non-UN peacekeeping operations.

Even though the United Nations had generally been opposed to the notion of using force to keep peace, its benign policy was severely put to the test shortly after the post-Cold War period. There were situations which demanded use of force but then the question of legality of armed intervention had to be kept in view. The General Assembly was clamoring for results and use of force under UN Charter, but (Chapter 6) was not delivering. The newer and widely accessible media brought news of massacres and starvation to every corner of the world and an international demand for more robust UNs' action became vociferous. Resultantly, once the UN determined the necessity of a force, its application became an issue; a thin line between national sovereignty and issue of neutrality had to be carefully negotiated. This problem was highly visible in UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Consequently, the UN had to face criticism from member states and negative propaganda from general public. In fact it seemed to be entrapped in its own rules and weight, and could not justify its inaction or feeble response where it chose to take action. In these missions the UN created its own protection forces. This attempt proved disastrous in that UN protection forces did not have the military weight to offer either protection or force.

Scathing criticism on United Nations' performance coming from outside as well as from within produced results, as in the case of Brahimi Report 2000 that called for a major overhaul of UN policies and application. Consequently a complete revamp of its internal structures and increasing use of the option to outsource some of its protection tasks to regional, and in some case extra regional alliances and pacts are increasingly being witnessed today. Entities like African Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan are increasingly being observed to provide forceful intervention under the UN's auspices and mandate in different regions of the world.

Lessons Learnt from United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

Srebrenica (1995)

Towards the end of 1999, the world was stunned by a very candid internal report reviewing UN's failures leading to deaths of thousands under its protection in Srebrenica in 1995 (United Nations General Assembly, 1999). This report highlighted policy failures, command and structural weaknesses as well as squabbling within the Security Council itself which led to the fiasco. Grim reality was that most of these errors were avoidable if timely decisions based on real intelligence were taken. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan assumed complete responsibility for these mistakes, which had occurred during his tenure as Under-Secretary-General for peacekeeping. Summary of lessons learnt as taken out of the report is appended below for reference;

- Peacekeeping operations without political consensus are doomed to failure.
- Peacekeepers under their traditional role and with light arms must never be deployed into an environment in which there is no ceasefire or peace agreement.
- Safe areas must never be established without consent of the parties to the conflict or credible military deterrence.
- Delay in use of force and appeasement of warring factions are a sure way to disaster.
- Means provided must be in consonance with the mandate otherwise mandate cannot be fulfilled.
- Timidity masquerading as political neutrality has also led to the operational failure to openly confront those who challenge a peace keeping objective in the field.

Rwanda (1994)

A month after the Srebrenica report, an international panel chaired by former Swedish Prime Minister, Ingmar Carlson tabled a similar report on the UN's failure to prevent the genocide of half a million Rwandans in 1994. In summary the first UN mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR I), was initially at a strength of 1700, however it was reduced to 270 as the US after its ignominious defeat in Somalia did not have the resolve for funding yet another disastrous mission by UN. Rwanda's holocaust of 1994 started after its President was killed in his aircraft. The Tutsi dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took advantage of the chaos by killing as many Hutus and their supporters as possible without anyone suspecting them of their capability. The inquiry report's recommendations are as appended below; (Report of The Independent Inquiry, 1999);

- An action plan in light of Genocide Convention must be prepared by UN. It must include early warning and prevention capabilities.
- Special training for staff both at UN headquarters, in agencies and programmes, and personnel in field missions, to identify warning signs, analyse them, and translate it into appropriate action.
- In situations where peacekeeping operation might be confronted with the risk of massive killings or genocide it must be made clear in the mandate and rules of engagement of that mission that traditional neutrality cannot be applied in such situations.
- Improve capacity to conduct peace operations and in particular to ensure rapid deployment of missions into the field.
- Ensure necessary resources for peacekeeping, including UN standby arrangements, and decision to withdraw contingents resting with UN and not contributing nation.
- Increase preparedness for contingency planning at all levels.
- Ensure rapid availability of logistics.
- Need for robust mandate commensurate with needs on ground.
- Ensure leadership of an operation arrives in a well-planned manner.

- Full coordination between UN Secretariat and other affected agencies, and between peacekeeping operations and NGOs active in the area.
- Ensure lessons learnt from previous missions are incorporated in planning of new one.
- Improve cooperation between UN and regional organizations.
- Improve flow of information within UN system, and to Security Council.

The African Union's Stabilization Mission in Somalia

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a regional peacekeeping mission in place by the African Union under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council. Its mandate includes supporting transitional governmental structures, implementing a national security plan, training the Somali security forces, and assisting in creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid (Resolution 1772, 2007). As a part of its duties, AMISOM also supports the Federal Government of Somalia's forces in their battle against Al-Shabaab militants. International Peace Institute (IPI) has published an excellent analysis. Summary of the analysis is appended below (Lotze & Williams, 2016);

- Missions must be appropriately configured to fulfil their mandate.
- The political and military elements of a stabilization strategy must be in sync.
- Extending state authority is not synonymous with peacebuilding, at least in the short term.
- Territorial expansion is less important than degrading the capabilities of spoilers.
- Strategic coordination among relevant partners is a crucial, mainly political task.
- Lack of coordination can have negative political and military effects.
- Effective stabilization requires positive relationships between peacekeepers and the local population.
- There can be no successful exit without building capable, legitimate, and inclusive national security forces.
- UN organizational frameworks and bureaucratic culture are not suited to supporting war-fighting operations.

A glance through lessons learnt at the end of various UN peacekeeping missions point towards a stark reality that most of analytical studies and their recommendations contribute towards improving the strategic level of UN operations and very little is visible for day to day functioning at tactical and operational levels. Notwithstanding the fact that Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) at UN headquarters is doing its best to gather and incorporate in its training manuals and guidelines all the lessons learnt and best practices from across the globe, yet we find that either these do not reach the right audience or the activity is not wholesome. A study of various UN peacekeeping operations point towards a strong connection between intent, mandate and capability. Whenever UN operations were undertaken

without clear intent as in the case of Srebrenica as cited above, or the mandate and capability were not commensurate with mission as was evident in Rwanda, the recipe for disaster was complete. Aside from these strategic shortcomings, there were many occasions where military units and headquarters as well as charismatic leaders evolved their own methodology, while remaining within the UN standing operating procedures which produced excellent results. Best practices at tactical levels whether these pertained to developing a rapport with the local community, or dealt with effective patrolling and escort techniques which proved useful, needed to be shared across the mission as well as UN wide level.

Having had a glimpse of different UN peacekeeping operations and before proceeding further it would be useful to discuss the support that United Nations gets from its members as far as boots on ground is concerned. Diversity in ethnic, religious, and social back grounds that these troops represent is further complicated by the doctrinal, equipment, procedural, and training disparities.

UN Peacekeeping and Integrated Training System

Bulk of the troops that comprise United Nation’s peacekeeping effort come from developing or under developed countries. Even though within 122 Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) there are many developed nations but their contribution is insignificant. List of top ten contributors out of 122 as of May, 2019 is given below which points to the diversity in their nature. The contributors also include militaries from USA, UK, Austria, Sweden, France, and Australia etc., albeit at a smaller scale.

Ethiopia	7499
Rwanda	6546
Bangladesh	6487
India	6319
Nepal	5834
Pakistan	5092
Egypt	3778
Indonesia	2805
Ghana	2777
Senegal	2645

Table 1: Troop Contributing Countries by their Size

It is evident that personnel for this all-encompassing task by United Nations come from countries with diverse back grounds of military as well as civilian sectors. Their level of sophistication, and education is different and includes from highest to lowest in the spectrum. Similarly concerning their military, the doctrines, equipment, and training differs diagrammatically. Whereas some nations have the resources and wherewithal to equip their militaries with latest equipment in command, control and intelligence gathering capabilities employing state of the art satellite imagery and drones, there are others which find it difficult to even use rudimentary military maps.

Military operations encompass a wide canvas from large scale employment of heavy forces to minor operations more attuned to latest ‘Low Intensity Conflict’. Actual combat experience goes a long way in preparing a military to make its presence felt in any theatre of operation. Diversity in handling various types of operations goes further

to bring maturity and confidence in a force and yet it reveals that whereas some countries have had extensive operational experience while others have not had similar exposure. Consequent to national needs, the training philosophy and its intensity is also varied in all these nations resulting into an operational nightmare for the integrated UN Force.

There is an operational requirement that these participants in peacekeeping are brought into some shape before deployment and continue to train while in mission area so as to become a coherent and useful tool in the hands of leaders in peacekeeping operations. UN has established a well thought out system of pre-deployment, and in-mission training that draws on its own training policy and doctrine while rejuvenating it periodically through lessons learnt from its vast peacekeeping effort. Apart from UN, the troop contributing countries also put in their training effort before the earmarked personnel leave for overseas. But this training effort is again influenced by their unique capabilities. The facilities available in a country, its doctrinal aspects, capacity and level of expertise of their training institutions is different and resultantly the troops cannot be expected to gel seamlessly when these become part of an integrated UN force in a far-off land. United Nations' Integrated Training Service (ITS) attempts to bridge this gap by outlining detailed policy and lessons to be taught as part of pre induction training but again it can only contribute partly to the effort. Majority of UN training institutes remain out of the loop as far lessons learnt and best practices are concerned and therefore have to contend with the last updates on lessons plans issued by UNITS. Above all, there is little towards unifying and streamlining the military training aspects under UN environments and thus are left to indigenous policies and doctrines of various nations.

United Nations Integrated Training Service (ITS)

UN Integrated Training Service is responsible for managing all training activity for UN's Peacekeeping. It provides advice and training materials to all troop and police contributing countries based on a unified curriculum and suggested methodology. UN Peace Keeping Resource Hub defines the concept as (United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub, 2019); Peacekeeping training is defined as any training activity which aims to enhance mandate implementation by equipping UN military, police or civilian personnel, both individually and collectively, with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to;

- Meet the evolving challenges of peacekeeping operations in accordance with principles, policies and guidelines, as well as lessons learnt from the field.
- Perform their specialist functions in an effective, professional and integrated manner.
- Demonstrate the core values and competencies of the UN.

The role of member states in working towards the establishment of a comprehensive framework has also been remarkable and reflects in the following resolution;

In General Assembly Resolution A/RES/49/37 (1995), Member States recognized their responsibility for the training of uniformed personnel for UN peacekeeping operations and requested the

Secretary-General to develop training materials and establish a range of measures to assist Member States in this regard. With the restructuring of Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and establishment of Department of Field Support (DFS) in 2007, the Integrated Training Service (ITS) in DPET was created as the responsibility center for peacekeeping training. Peacekeeping training is regarded as strategic investment that enables UN military, police and civilian staff to effectively implement increasingly multifaceted mandates.

Towards this end, ITS develops peacekeeping training policies and guidelines while taking into consideration expertise from member states, various Peacekeeping Training Institutions (PKTIs) and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) both in military as well as in civil domain. It categorizes training materials into Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTMs), and Specialized Training Materials (STMs) for troops earmarked to be employed in UN peacekeeping operations. In theory at least it takes into cognizance latest developments in the field, focusing on best practices adopted by individuals, groups, and at mission level. Lessons learnt from UN’s successes and failures are also kept in view while developing guidelines. The aim is to improve the quality of combat power generated by troop contributing countries in support of UN peacekeeping operations; to develop them into a more cohesive and manageable integrated force. To perform this onerous responsibility the ITS is organized as shown in Figure 1;

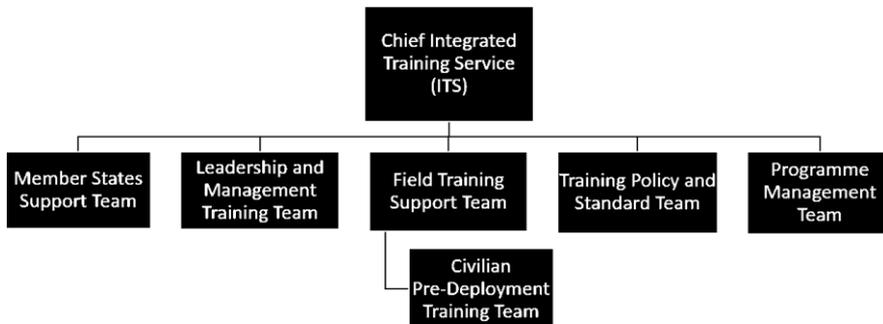


Figure 1: Organization of Integrated Training System (ITS)

Member states recognized the requirement of peacekeeping training and brought to the attention of the Secretary General in 1995 for the same. However, despite this and recognition of importance of training in Brahimi Report (2000), which contained a number of recommendations in this area, it was only in 2008 that the UN drafted its first comprehensive strategy for training after a lapse of thirteen years.

With continuously changing peacekeeping environment which increasingly witnessed a transition from Chapter 6 to Chapter 7 in UN mandate, there has been a considerable increase in the number of national, regional, and international centers providing training for UN peacekeepers. Where it represents a welcome change from the past and addresses to some extent the disparity of effectiveness among various troop contributing countries, it also poses challenges in relation to the quality of various

training actors, with regards to doctrine, policy guidance, and certification. There is a need to ensure that training, no matter where it is done and by whom, adheres to common standards and produces peacekeepers with the necessary skills. With facilities spread all over the world under different environments it is an enormous task; a task which requires detailed interaction, and close monitoring. Furthermore, starting from UN doctrine of employment till low level tactical procedures, from equipment standardization to weapons interoperability, from communications to logistics, the list of issues needing ironing out are endless and traditional UN speed of action is not in keeping with ever increasing frequency of conflicts the world over. There is an urgent need to move on war footing and address all these issues in close harmony with the troop contributing countries. Similar to other professional militaries, there is a need to come up with manuals and procedures of employing infantry units, logistics, intelligence, services, and logistics; need for standard data templates of each unit and sub unit for calculation of operational and logistic estimates, requirement of ammunition, and other UN specific equipment.

With the diverse experience of UN peacekeeping operations spread over all parts of the world and under all types of scenarios, it would be incredibly concerning if the organizational memory did not register what worked best under a given set of circumstances and what did not. Experiences of successes and failures at individual, tactical, operational and strategic level are simply too precious to ignore and the only requirement is for developing an integrated and effective system of recording and sharing. Since 2007, this function has been taken over by the ‘Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training and Policy’ and Best Practice Service is one of its main constituents.

Best practices and Lessons Learnt Journey

For the UN headquarter, the journey started in 1995 with establishment of its first best practices capacity, consisting of three staff members. This limited capacity was indeed not sufficient to meaningfully extract data from all peacekeeping missions, verify and consolidate it, and finally to disseminate it. The problem got further compounded with trend of change in UN mandates after 1990s. After the Cold War era, numerous conflicts started to appear and Peacekeeping troops began to find themselves in complex and fluid environments that required them to adapt, create, and learn on a daily basis in order to achieve their mission mandate. There was a need to identify valuable lessons learnt and adaptation of best practices by various missions, recording of data after validation, consolidation into various levels of operations and then finally to share these among all the partners. This enterprising task needed more manpower, and organization with global reach if not global presence at all times.

Between 1995 and 2000, this limited staff with limited resources travelled to peacekeeping missions, interacted and consulted with senior leadership and experts. These efforts resulted into drafted reports (Peacekeeping Best Practices, 2007). The Lessons-Learned Unit produced ‘Lessons-learned studies focusing on best practices from various missions. However, soon the practice proved to be insufficient as well as cursory. Inadequacy of the whole exercise is evident in the words of Secretary General himself who commented following on the report;

‘The results of a survey conducted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat in 2004 showed that staff members in the field wanted better

institutional guidance. Of the 594 respondents, 50 per cent indicated that they had to recreate guidance (or “reinvent the wheel”) “all the time” or “very often”, and 46 per cent indicated that they had received no guidance materials or oral guidance upon starting their current job. Only 28 per cent responded that they had received any kind of written instructions in the form of policies, manuals, best practices or otherwise. The survey and the findings of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations highlighted the need for improvements in the lessons-learning system available to peacekeeping personnel at that time.’

Brahimi Report (2000)

The UN Secretary General convened a high-level Panel, to review the UN peace and security activities in its entirety, and at its head he chose Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the former Foreign Minister of Algeria. After a very thorough analysis which involved extensive consultation with all stake holders the panel submitted its report on 17 August, 2000 the panel observed that UN system’s ability to tap invaluable resource of lessons learnt and best practices was inadequate and therefore could not do justice to development of operational doctrine, plans, procedures or mandates. It also opined that the work of DPKO’s Lessons Learned Unit did not influence peace operations, practices, and the compilation of lessons learned was relegated to a ritual meant for end of mission activity only. In its view, the essence lay in capturing and retaining lessons learnt and best practices for the benefit of other concurrent missions as well as for future missions in real time rather than waiting for next update after five years. The report recommended that the capacity needed to be enhanced and be located where it could work closely with and contribute to ongoing operations while at the same time had a say in mission planning and doctrine and/ or guidelines.

Secretary General’s Report on Peacekeeping Best Practices (2007)

As per this report, an assessment of training policies of some twenty international organizations was carried out to ascertain as to how did they benefit from ‘Best Practices and Lessons Learnt’ in their respective fields. The new system sought to encompass all activities including but not limited to lessons learning, validation, policy formulation and dissemination. It also took upon itself over-watch of training, implementation, and evaluation. In July, 2007 further restructuring was carried out, and methodology was further institutionalized through establishment of a brand-new ‘Policy, Evaluation, and Training Division’. After this regrouping the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section (renamed from Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit in 2005), the ‘Integrated Training Service’ and a new evaluation capacity was brought under a single Division. The new Division was designed to provide best practices, guidance, development, and training services to both the DPKO and the Department of Field Support to ensure that the two departments operate according to a common doctrine. As per the report, lessons-learned and best practices activities were coordinated by the Knowledge Management Team. It sought to disseminate information through indirect means of supporting online knowledge networks, and through the peace operations

Intranet. This team was responsible for; (n.a, 2007);

- Coordinating and providing guidance to the network of field-based Policy Best Practices Officers (PBPOs);
- Developing standardized tools for the capture of best practices and lessons;
- Processing and analyzing best practices reports to identify major trends and issues, which are then brought to the attention of the senior management of the DPKO and the Department of Field;
- Support and help shape the policy planning agenda.

Despite lapse of precious time, and number of improvements, it becomes starkly clear that all the effort is focused upon revamping the headquarter management while missing the most important link in the whole process, i.e. the field mission. BPOs are nothing but hastily nominated amongst existing staff at various field missions who are actually employed for other duties and cannot hope to do justice to either of the hats they are supposed to be wearing at the time. They are neither trained nor qualified for the onerous responsibility. Templates and various other tools they are proffered by the UN headquarter are new to them and can hardly be of any use. They are left to decide on their own as to what to include and what to ignore. There is no organized framework within the mission level which ensures that lessons learnt and best practices are identified, analyzed, put into shape for reference and logged under appropriate individual, tactical, operational or strategic level. There is no mandatory periodical/on occurrence input from missions to UN headquarters. Consequently, concurrent missions and operators are once again left out till a consolidated bulletin is received. Similarly all the training institutions at member country level are left out of the whole process. In addition, there is no mandatory mechanism to ensure that they receive and incorporate the valuable input into their curriculum in a regular and comprehensive manner.

UNDPO's Latest Policy

UNDPO's latest policy on 'Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning' was released in September, 2015. As against the policies and guidelines in the past, this policy is comprehensive and in detail. It covers many aspects and seeks to promote learning from best practices and lessons learnt process. It addresses all UN personnel and declares learning through this process mandatory while holding senior leadership among civilian, military, and police forces under UN mandate within a mission area responsible. It sets out that lessons learnt after each significant activity shall be integrated into the peacekeeping process by ensuring that all major or minor activity while it is at planning stage shall be preceded by review of all relevant lessons learnt and logged best practices. It also makes it necessary for UN headquarters staff to do the same while benefitting from United Nations system organizations, regional organizations and private sector.

It goes onto require designation of PBPOs in all missions and designation of Focal Point (FP) in each Headquarters, but falls short of instituting a special cadre of specialist UN officers for this purpose. The policy requires of all mission management to create conducive environments for documenting and learning through this process as well as contributing to collective UN memory.

Analysis

Peacekeeping Institutions out of Loop

Despite issuing a very comprehensive policy on ‘Lessons Learnt and Best Practices’ in 2015, an all-important training resource in the shape of member countries’ pre deployment training institutions have not been kept in the loop. These institutions strictly employ UNITS provided training material and off and on continue to help out UN by contributing valuable training material, and yet missing these institutions from benefitting from the new policy is not understood. Recording of lessons learnt from a challenge or best practices from a success story is a subject which cannot be acquired by an individual or a group in a short lecture in mission area. Ideally, the latest policy along with already acquired lessons must be shared fully with member countries so that these can be incorporated in pre-induction training of individuals and contingents. Similarly, if these institutions are consulted before compiling these lessons then valuable input can be provided by member countries with their own knowledge gained from returning contingents. There is a need for utilizing member states’ capabilities to reinforce and outsource this important facet of training.

Tactical, Operational and Individual Lessons are Out of Focus

Available resources are replete with excellent reviews of various UN missions, their achievements and challenges. However, majority of these only analyze and draw lessons at strategic level. It is of great concern that whereas the performance and actions of state actors, UN headquarters procedures, in-action or diverse interests of world powers, and strategic environments are discussed threadbare and valuable lessons for improvement are recommended and mostly incorporated in UN systems and yet operational, tactical, and individual level actions are missed. Brahimi’s report of 2000 is a case in point on this grave omission and highlights that there are actions and Standing Operating Procedures successfully employed by individual members, leaders, and contingents in riot control, in winning the hearts and minds of beneficiaries, patrolling techniques under difficult environments which go un-recorded and are not analyzed for their usefulness. Similarly there must be so many valuable lessons among UN program operators and professionals which need to be recorded for emulation in other missions. There is a need to encourage and develop a culture of recording and sharing personal, group and mission level techniques for guiding others. Similarly pitfalls and failures in every facet of UN activity could prove extremely useful for others if recorded and shared in real time.

Not Mandatory Part of Pre-Induction Training

All training activity includes three distinct phases; pre-induction, during operations, and after mission de-briefing and analysis. A detailed analysis of UN’s latest policy on the subject reveals that whereas it seems comprehensive enough regarding the middle phase, it is lacking in the first and last. During employment in mission areas all the individual actors and groups are so immersed in their day-to-day activities that in-mission training becomes a chore. Obviously, lacking the ability to spare key individuals for this all important aspect, only relatively spare redundant individuals are made available to go through motions of this UN requirement. Resultantly, only a handful and insignificant percentage undergoes it and thus the overall spirit of this initiative is lost. If introduced and made part of syllabus in the pre-induction training package being run by various member states the individuals would arrive in mission

area with knowledge of the subject and importance of recording their actions suitably logged in their minds, and further building on it in mission area would then become meaningful and easy.

Not Visible in Core Pre-Induction Training Material and Specialized Training Material

There is very detailed and pertinent training material in the shape of Core Pre-Induction Training Material and Standardized Training Material available on main UN training site for all to benefit from. Whether consulting it for reference, research, or training, the guidelines and SOPs on almost all subjects are explained which is a very commendable job. However, the only thing that is missing in its entirety is the 'Lessons Learnt and Best Practices' section. This omission has not occurred only with the issue of its latest policy but has been absent from the outset. Resultantly, whatever little and fragmented effort has been made towards its propagation in the past, the achievement is not available on this site which brings to the fore an important grey area.

Actual Implementation of New Policy is Questionable

It is a known fact that within corporate businesses and to an extent in military quarters, there is a distinct gap between issuance of a policy and its actual implementation. It takes time for new instructions especially if these are of continuous nature and are to be followed in perpetuity, before these become routine. A horde of measures including comprehensive dissemination, translation into measures at different levels of implementation, cross checks on internalization, oversight regime on adherence, and process of accountability in case of omission, are needed before a new policy takes hold and becomes routine. Even though the new policy attempts to touch upon this aspect but in a cursory way and leaves much to be desired. There is definitely a need for follow up instructions, a regime of incentives and accountability and broad dissemination before any hope of its actual implementation can be materialized.

Need for Separate Cadre of Recorders

The concept of analyzing actions and activities at individual, tactical, operational and strategic levels require professional acumen, a trained analytical mind, and above all a dispassionate view. It is in the same vein that a cadre of political, military as well as historical analysts has emerged within society and the subject has been taken over not by participants or stakeholders of an activity but by extraneous specialists who are better placed for an impassive view. A UN member whether in civil sector or in uniform is at best a manager of a particular set of activities and can seldom be entrusted with analyzing his/her own actions. Furthermore, contingents of police and military from any member country join a mission team for a specified duration which is both short and non-repetitive and therefore incapable of producing professional recorders UN needs to recruit qualified and experienced individuals who can be rotated on important missions to hunt for valuable lessons and best practices.

Need For Synthesis at Strategic, Operational, Tactical, Individual Level

Continuous reform leading towards improvement of a process makes it more efficient, and this leads towards better achievement of goals. There are varied levels of reform ranging from strategic down to individual level, and since each level is intertwined, reform at one level to the exclusion of rest would never deliver desired results. There are invaluable analytical studies of UN operations carried out by UN special

committees, regional organizations and alliances such as African Union, NATO, and European Union etc. Whereas these studies have highlighted pertinent lessons but most of these are within political and strategic domain, and resultantly many reforms at UN level corresponding to same domains have been affected. On the other hand, quality work at recording lower levels has remained mostly elusive and operational and tactical planes have consequently suffered. There is a need to form special committees in order to revisit major achievements and failures of past UN operations with the scope restricted to these levels. Similarly, the latest policy should also address this issue for more inclusive lessons learnt and best practices in future.

Conclusion

Learning from past mistakes is a great human attribute which unfortunately is often forgotten whenever a newer endeavor is undertaken. It is only a catastrophic failure that reminds one of its efficacies. Man's quest for peace has seen the use of instrument of war for prevalence of peace, albeit at others' cost. Resultantly, different models have been tried to avoid war, and formation of League of Nations and later United Nations point towards the same elusive goal. United Nations, established in 1945, has come a long way towards achieving this goal, and where pre-emption has failed, it has actively taken part in the conflict to stem it from further spread. From practice of benign and almost passive monitoring of a conflict in the past it has morphed into a strong *intervention force* which seeks to fulfil goal of peace, in which it is supported by its member states which contributed in all ways including provision of troops. Where diversity among its members make its character rich, the same diversity creates a dilemma of employment of its troops in the field. In order for making this milieu of troops into a well-knit team prepared to take on newer challenges, the UNITS continuously endeavors to provide guidelines and material for training. For this purpose, services of international experts are employed on one hand, history or past practices are tapped into on the other.

Issuance of its policy in 2015 is a reminder of importance it places on lessons learnt from past mistakes and adoption of best practices that witnessed success. A great deal of emphasis and details have been covered in this policy, but at the same time a lot has been left out. While identifying and learning from strategic errors, it has not dealt with operational, tactical, and individual level. Similarly, significance of pre-induction training by troop contributing countries has been relegated to the exclusion of member states in the process. It has been argued that there is need of redressing these grey areas to make the process of transforming member state's contingents into a well-knit and integral UN team for successful future operations. While endeavoring to learn from past experience, it is always useful to keep in perspective this quote by Margaret MacMillan; 'We can learn from history, but we can also deceive ourselves when we selectively take evidence from the past to justify what we have already made up our minds to do.'

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