Peacekeeping has always occupied a hard-to-define niche within a large body of military principles and practice that varies by country and changes over time. For a long time peacekeeping was the preserve of neutral and non-aligned states whose forces could competently monitor a buffer zone but not actually defend it, and for whom the mantra of “consent, neutrality, and non-use of force” embodied both political principle and force protection strategy. Most of these operations were UN-led, although the United Nations promulgated no formal concept of peace operations until UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992.  

The traditional model of peacekeeping was strongly associated with the Nordic states. The third edition of *Nordic UN Stand-by Forces*, published in 1986 and intended as a handbook for officers preparing to deploy on UN missions, devoted no space to the use of force or the rules of engagement (ROE) under which force might be used. Indeed, even today, not many states have specific doctrines for peace operations that encompass the more complex and risky missions of recent years.

This section traces the evolution of thinking about complex PSOs at the United Nations, at NATO, and in three states that do have doctrines for complex operations (France, the United States, and the United Kingdom), wield vetoes as permanent members of the UN Security Council, belong to NATO, and possess most of the world’s expeditionary military capabilities. How their doctrines have changed over the past decade (and shaped institutional doctrines in turn) reflects what their armed forces have learned from recent operations and suggests the shape of future international response to demand for support of peace.

**Early to Mid-1990s**

consent, neutrality, use of force in self-defense) from peace enforcement
(operations “to restore peace between hostile factions” or otherwise restore
order). Both, however, were subcategories of low intensity conflict. British
document circa 1989 built on that country’s experience with traditional buffer-
zone operations like Cyprus and placed peacekeeping outside the “spectrum of
conflict.” Neither doctrine, Cassidy argued, prepared either country for the
complex and chaotic environments that their forces faced in Somalia and
Bosnia, respectively.31

The United Nations was the first multinational institution to define an approach
to peacekeeping, which international politics required that UN leaders call
something other than “doctrine.” An Agenda for Peace, commissioned in
January 1992 by the first meeting of the Security Council at the level of heads of
state, offered an oddly loose and incomplete definition of peacekeeping as “the
deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent
of all parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or
police personnel and frequently civilians as well.”32 In January 1995, a revised
version, Supplement to An Agenda for Peace, addressed the dramatic increase in
number and complexity of peacekeeping operations since the first version was
published, the shift in focus to the aftermath of internal conflict, and what this
shift entailed in terms of “building up…national institutions, the promotion of
human rights, the creation of civilian police forces and other actions in the
political field.” Supplement affirmed that “consent of the parties, impartiality
and the non-use of force except in self-defense” defined peacekeeping’s niche in
international security affairs and stressed that “peace-keeping and the use of
force (other than in self-defense) should be seen as alternative techniques and
not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the
other.”33 Supplement side-stepped the question of what to do when consent
decays or violence against civilians casts doubt on the value of “impartiality”
de-linked from the security of the local population.

In its strict separation of peacekeeping from all use of force beyond self-defense,
however, Supplement was consistent with then-prevailing US and British peace
operations doctrine. The US Army defined peacekeeping (“PK”) in terms of
consent and defined peace enforcement (“PE”) in terms of coercion, with no
conceptual overlap. Army Field Manual 100-23, Peace Operations, warned that
“PK and PE...are not part of a continuum,” that the existence of consent and
strict impartiality divided the former from the latter. A contingent doing peace
enforcement might well be capable of peacekeeping, but it should be swapped
out because “the impartiality and consent divides have been crossed.”34
British doctrine circa 1994–95 also used local consent to differentiate peacekeeping from other military practice but expanded the concept of peacekeeping to entertain the use of force in volatile tactical situations, provided consent was maintained at the national or “strategic” level (for example, amongst national leaders of a political faction, as opposed to their provincial or lower-level commanders). British doctrine distinguished such “wider peacekeeping” from peace enforcement in terms of the loss of such strategic-level consent. Strategic consent was lost by crossing the “Mogadishu Line,” a reference to UN and US actions in Somalia in 1993; unfortunately, there was no real way to draw that line in advance.

In March 1995, reflecting in part French experience in Bosnia, the chief of staff of France’s armed forces, General Jacques Lanxade, issued a directive that described three primary types of peace support operations:

- **Opérations de maintien de la paix**—authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter and based on the consent of the parties to the conflict, with a mission to monitor and facilitate the implementation of a ceasefire once hostilities have ceased. (Translated in NATO doctrine, below, as “peacekeeping.”)

- **Opérations de restauration de la paix**—authorized under Chapter VII, attempt to reconstitute peace in a country where hostilities continue and the security of populations is not assured, but without designating an enemy or an aggressor. (Translates as “peace restoration,” a term not incorporated into NATO doctrine.)

- **Opérations d’imposition de la paix**—limited war, authorized under Chapter VII to impose peace through the use of force against an identified enemy. (Translated in NATO doctrine as “peace enforcement” but there involving more restrained and impartial use of force.)

A January 1996 aide-memoire issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs further elaborated on these concepts, describing a middle ground between war and peace in which French troops should embrace the concept of “active impartiality,” or the proactive, aggressive use force against a particular party if that party’s actions contradicted the mission’s mandate or prevented the mission from performing its duties. French troops in peace restoration operations should therefore project a “credible coercive capacity,” and “enjoy, to the extent possible, undisputed military superiority,” on the assumption that a strong deterrent capacity would decrease the likelihood that force would actually be needed. Finally, French doctrine argued that peace maintenance, peace restoration and peace imposition should not be understood as strictly separated
categories but instead as key points along a spectrum of operations between peace and war, “a continuum of possibilities” in which “the principle of war fighting” remained “the foundation of action.”

The principles that French PSO doctrine applied to peacekeeping were very similar to the go-in-strong-and-sort-it-out-later Powell Doctrine for the wartime use of force by US military forces, named for then-Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, later Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

**Late 1990s to 2001**

In 1998, British doctrine adopted an approach to impartiality comparable to that of France, anchored in “international humanitarian law and/or the mandate, against which the actions of the belligerent parties can be judged and acted upon.” The new British doctrine offered a definition of what it called “peace support operations” that encompassed both peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The latter was distinguished from war not by the loss of local consent but by a shift from the impartial application of force to the designation of an enemy. Because peacekeeping and peace enforcement were now a conceptual and operational continuum, every “peace support force” should be capable of enforcing peace even if its immediate, mandated tasks were less daunting and its initial operating environment was relatively benign. By adopting both the concept of an operational continuum within peace operations and the need to be ready at all times to enforce the peace, British doctrine converged toward the French.

The UN’s August 2000 Brahimi Report reflected this convergence, which in turn reflected the realities of implementing agreements intended to settle sometimes-long-running conflicts within states. The report acknowledged peacekeeping’s roots in consent, neutrality, and the use of force only in self-defense but, grappling with many of the same issues as British doctrine writers, it also argued that UN peacekeepers should be prepared to contest local parties’ efforts to manipulate consent in ways that undermined the peace (by failing to carry out obligations under an accord, for example, by rebuilding their forces or by holding consent hostage to political payoffs). Impartiality for UN operations, it argued, must therefore mean adherence to the principles of the Charter “and to the objectives of a mandate that is rooted in those Charter principles. Such impartiality is not the same as neutrality or equal treatment of all parties in all cases for all time, which can amount to a policy of appeasement.” Once deployed, peacekeepers may find that “local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so. Genocide in Rwanda went as far as it did in part because the international community
failed to use or to reinforce the operation then on the ground in that country to oppose obvious evil.”

The Brahimi Report was careful to note that “the United Nations does not wage war. Where enforcement action is required, it has consistently been entrusted to coalitions of willing States, with the authorization of the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter.” But because the United Nations was often asked to accept responsibility for continuing a mission that a coalition had initiated—as in Somalia, Haiti, and East Timor in the 1990s and, in 2004, Haiti once again—it was important that UN forces be able to shoulder the burden of security that such missions entailed. If they could not do that, then it was better not to undertake the mission at all. To deploy a force “incapable of solidifying a fragile peace would first raise and then dash the hopes of a population engulfed in conflict or recovering from war, and damage the credibility of the United Nations as a whole.”

The report drew what was to some a fairly fine line between the ability to sustain peace by force if necessary and the ability to create it in the first place. The distinction is crucial, however, as the UN itself will never have access either to the standing forces or the command and control authority needed to undertake “enforcement actions,” even though such actions were envisioned by the drafters of the UN Charter in 1945.

Five months after the Brahimi Report was released, George W. Bush was sworn in as the 43rd president of the United States. Disentangling US forces from peacekeeping and “nation-building” obligations abroad had been a theme of the new president’s campaign for the office but the politics of disentanglement proved more tangled than expected. Washington’s NATO allies objected to unilateral US force reductions in Bosnia and Kosovo, while Israel and Egypt resisted the notion of US forces leaving the Multinational Force and Observers, which monitors the Sinai under the two countries’ 1979 peace treaty.

NATO, meanwhile, had been developing its own peace support operations doctrine and procedures over a period of years, with results that bear family resemblance to both US and UK doctrine at the turn of the century. Adopting the British terminology of “peace support operations,” Allied Joint Publication 3.4.1 of July 2001 situated PSOs within the “non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations” of its new Strategic Concept, adopted at the April 1999 NATO Summit in Washington, at the height of the organization’s Kosovo bombing campaign. AJP 3.4.1 stressed that PSO are normally conducted “in support of an internationally recognized organization, such as the UN or Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,” and are “characteristically
multifunctional” activities in which the military role “is normally to create the necessary conditions for other organizations to do their work and so create a stable, self-sustaining secure environment for the longer term.”\textsuperscript{45} PSOs are distinguished from other military operations by their “impartial approach” and lack of designated enemy or by “specifying a desired political end state rather than the achievement of military victory.”\textsuperscript{46} Impartiality, consent, and “restraint” in the use of force are the guiding operational principals for NATO PSOs, but impartiality is defined in the British manner as anchored in the mandate and as implementation “without favour or prejudice to any party,” meaning that a given level of non-compliance will generate a requisite level of enforcement regardless of who is being non-compliant. The NATO doctrine also incorporates the British sensibility about consent, cautioning that while it may hold at the strategic level, “there may be local groups who disagree violently with their leaders and who may be hostile to the PSO,” and that these conditions will vary over time, in different parts of the Area of Operation, and at different levels of the local political hierarchy.\textsuperscript{47}

**2002 FORWARD**

The new US administration continued for a while to regard peacekeeping and “nation building” as obstacles to the prosecution of the war on terrorism, rather than as building blocks in winning it. The new US *National Security Strategy*, published in September 2002, laid out a pro-active approach to countering terrorism and curtailing its spread by spreading American values. It declared that there was but “a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise;” that “[t]he United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere;” and that “[n]o nation owns these aspirations and no nation is exempt from them.”\textsuperscript{48}

The Bush administration endorsed “stability operations” as the preferred umbrella term for a range of military operations other than war that included peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The US Army issued Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, five months after the release of the new national security strategy. It retained peacekeeping and peace enforcement as distinct activities under stability operations. Peacekeeping was still defined in traditional terms as “undertaken with the consent of all major parties to a dispute, designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement...and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement,” with force used “only in self-defense.” Peace enforcement was “the application of military force, or the threat of its use, normally pursuant to international authorization, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore
peace and order." International authorization was still a normal constituent element of peace enforcement operations.

The US Army remained uneasy about shifting or “transitioning” a force from peacekeeping to peace enforcement or vice versa (NATO doctrine reflects similar concerns). Unavoidable transitions were to be preceded by changes in mandate or political guidance and by “appropriate adjustments to force structure, ROE, and other aspects of the mission.” In other words, commanders were not to drift into role transitions and decision makers should not require that they make such transitions without first changing the formal instructions and the tools for doing the mission. The doctrine devoted several paragraphs to warning against these two forms of “mission creep.”

A year later, the UK released a revised version of its doctrine for PSOs. The revised edition of Joint Warfare Publication 3-50 was a radical rethink that embraced the notion of an unsegmented spectrum of tension that requires the equally agile adaptation of deployed forces to changing field circumstances. The new document argued that previous doctrine had unduly “compartmentalized” reality and misrepresented the nature of the situations in which peace support forces find themselves. Going further, it argued that since military force “complements diplomacy across the spectrum of tension,” a PSO ought to be able to occur “at any point on that spectrum.” Thus it advanced what it called the “one doctrine concept.” Instead of defining boundaries between different kinds of missions, the new approach portrayed a fluid mission space in which any given force must be capable of taking any of three “stances”—enforcement, stabilization, or transition—as circumstances require. An enforcement stance would emphasize the coercive and deterrent use of force to uphold a mandate in an environment that may entail high risk of conflict escalation. A stabilization stance would “normally warrant the use of force in self-defence alone,” while a transition stance would emphasize the reform, training, and reconstitution of indigenous forces and planning for mission handover or exit. Selection of stance would depend on operational requirements and on what JWP 3-50 calls “campaign authority,” which “defines the capacity of a PSO to act in the collective interest of all parties, and thereby achieve a sustainable peace.” Campaign authority is a composite of several interdependent variables: local perceptions of the legitimacy of an operation’s mandate and of the freedom of action that operation has been given; the extent to which the operation’s activities meet local expectations; and the degree of local consent to its presence.

These factors can be difficult to sort out and appear to loop back upon themselves to some degree. Consent, for example, clearly can be affected by
whether the operation meets expectations and those, in turn, by how it uses its freedom of action. So sometimes campaign authority defines a PSO’s capacity to act, sometimes its actions alter campaign authority, and sometimes that authority is affected by circumstances outside the PSO’s immediate control.

The revised British doctrine argues that, in defining a PSO, “effects” (ends, objectives) matter more than the means employed to achieve them:

[T]he distinction between tasks that fall within the definition of Peace Support Operations and other tasks lies, not in doctrine or the range of military capabilities that may be employed but in the effects that the military instrument will be required to achieve. In PSOs, the desired strategic effect, or intent, is to uphold international peace and security by resolving conflicts by means of prevention, conciliation, deterrence, containment or stabilization. Generally, in other contingent overseas operational tasks, the intention is to prosecute the conflict or dispute until the enemies are disrupted, defeated, destroyed or surrendered.\(^5\)

Despite the emphasis on effects-based definitions for PSOs, they are distinguished in the preceding paragraph by means used (prevention, etc.) and by effects “avoided” (including “enemies…disrupted, defeated, destroyed or surrender[ed]”).

US doctrine also evolved further by 2004, informed mostly by military experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, two very difficult theaters with ongoing counter-insurgency operations in significant portions of both countries and terror campaigns mounted against foreign workers and host country nationals working either with the international community or with the respective transitional governments. Thus, Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.05, defined stability operations as, “Military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in States and regions.”\(^5\) The Directive (at paragraph 4.1) makes it DoD policy that “stability operations are a core US military mission and US military forces should be prepared to undertake them,” with priority “comparable to combat operations.” It defines (in paragraph 4.2) immediate operational goals as security, essential services, and humanitarian needs. Long-term goals are “to help develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a robust civil society.”\(^5\) With this directive, DoD embraced state-building, albeit on its terms.

US Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), meanwhile, was developing a family of operational concepts, headed by a Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, that looked ahead to the requirements of the next decade. The capstone document
anticipated three principal future threats to US interests: transnational security threats, “including threats from networked ideologues, criminals, or other hostile elements. . . employing terrorism or other methods”; regional, near-peer and emerging global competitors (that is, other powerful states); and failing or failed states “that afford potential safe haven for terrorist or other criminal elements and . . . may be ripe for humanitarian or political crises that threaten stability and security in surrounding regions.” US military forces would address these threats as part of the full spectrum of US power, working with other US agencies and with “private, non-governmental, regional, and international organizations” in a “continuum” of military operations ranging from the maintenance of peace and stability “through conflict to reconstruction.”

Although a chart depicting the range of military operations in the capstone document includes both “peacekeeping” and “peace enforcement,” these terms did not appear in the Joint Operating Concept (“JOpsC”) that JFCOM released for comment in September 2004. That document defined “stability operations” as,

multi-agency operations that involve all instruments of national and multinational action, including the international humanitarian and reconstruction community to support major conventional combat operations if necessary; establish security; facilitate reconstruction among local or regional adversaries; establish the political, social, and economic architecture; and facilitate the transition to legitimate local governance.

“Multi-agency” refers to other US federal agencies. The tasks listed above include many that one would normally associate with complex peace operations. The major exception, of course, is support for “major combat operations.” Indeed, the draft JOpsC made clear that stability operations were to be conducted “in support of civilian agencies and organizations to complete the achievement of wartime political objectives.” [Emphasis added.] The notion that US forces might be invited to help implement a negotiated end to someone else’s war was not contemplated, although it might be considered a lesser-included case in addition to the four “core” cases listed: foreign internal defense (or counter-insurgency); regime change; mounting international receiverships in failed states; and counter-terrorism. Of these four, only number three approaches the objectives and ethos of peace support operations as addressed by NATO or the UN. The document itself focused on case two, the analog to Iraq.

Although this document remained in draft form at the time of writing and would likely change, it reflected the political zeitgeist that propelled the US invasion of Iraq, which put military action at the cutting edge of a strategy intended not just
to restore political order but to promote a better one, a “new normal,” in failing or dangerous states. The authority to promote new political order in such circumstances was implicitly national, with no mention of the United Nations, NATO, the African Union, or the Organization of American States, and no discussion of the relative costs and benefits of international authorization. Multinational operations were implicitly U.S.-led coalitions. Although the draft noted that commanders have “obligations under international law,” the laws themselves, such as the Geneva Conventions, were not referenced, despite the JOpsC’s heavy emphasis on combat and what amounted to a strategy for post-war occupation. DoD Directive 3000.05 was similarly silent on international law or higher authority, even as operational conveniences.

Contrasts with British doctrine in this regard were rather stark: The revised JWP 3-50 stressed that the source of a PSO’s operating authority affects its international legitimacy, and that legitimacy helps determine campaign authority. It noted that the “most widely respected authority for a PSO” is a UN mandate. Although regional mandates “can provide for more timely, preventative, or responsive action, than might be possible through the UN,” non-UN mandates are also “vulnerable to perceptions of bias and may prove sensitive to variations in international will. Similarly, the legitimacy of unilateral or small coalition action is frequently challenged, and can act to compound the underlying causes of a conflict when the PSO is thought to reflect a disregard for international law…” Finally, JWP 3-50 warned that acting without UN approval “has invariably attracted international opprobrium and accusations of acting above international law.”

**IMPLICATIONS**

Looking back at the recent evolution of these doctrines for undertaking PSOs and stability operations, the old walls that initially segregated peace operations from war-fighting clearly have been crumbling. Not only are peacekeeping and peace enforcement now seen as endpoints of a peace operations continuum of decreasing consent and increasing use of force, but peace operations and war-fighting are increasingly viewed, in the doctrines of the three permanent members of the Security Council evaluated here, as differing in degree more than in kind. Rather than buy into the relatively humble, if risky, world of the PSO as confidence building measure, temporary security presence, and support agent for the voluntary dismantling of belligerent factions and the restructuring of host state security forces, these powers have reconceptualized peace operations as low-intensity conflict with a hefty hearts-and-minds annex. Rather than rely, going in, on local consent as a source of operational legitimacy, these doctrines posit that firm and fair implementation of post-conflict reconstruction
in an atmosphere of growing public security and tranquility will generate local consent. Experience of the past five years with efforts to impose political change has not, however, demonstrated the validity of this notion that power-makes-order-makes-consent. There is life yet in the notion of consent in some form as prerequisite to peace operations, as distinct from other military action, however well-intentioned, and in the notion, explored below, that international authorization not only reinforces the legitimacy of PSOs but, in some circumstances, provides substitute consent.

Although a UN-led PSO may follow military action that has imposed peace (as in Kosovo and post-Dayton Bosnia) and in theory might follow action to oust a government (for example, a genocidal regime that the international community has decided to stop), the UN has yet to take responsibility for military security in such circumstances. In virtually every other instance in which UN-led military forces have deployed, they have done so on the basis of local consent, either at the request of a government (for example, Haiti in 2004) or on the basis of an invitation embedded in a peace accord that in turn triggers a Security Council mandate. The same has been true of NATO and European Union peace operations.

The peace agreements that embody consent for a PSO also embody limits on what the invited force may do. The mandates that authorize the PSO in turn are keyed to those limits because sovereignty, however limited in practical terms in many failed-state and similar scenarios, can be ignored only at the outsiders’ eventual peril. Invitational operations are, in short, constrained by the sources of consent to their presence.

Although the Brahimi Report emphasized the value of consent to UN operations, it also argued that, once deployed, UN forces must be willing and able to defend themselves, their mandate, and those whom they are assigned to protect, against violent challenge. It argued, further, that UN PSOs should not be limited to reactive and tit-for-tat uses of force that “cede the initiative to their attackers.”

Regardless of whether use of force is reactive or proactive, however, the UN sees it as a tool for maintaining rather than creating consent for its operations. In principle, the use of force by any PSO should be calibrated and proportionate to the political-military objective sought and should entail the minimum force needed to achieve that objective. A fragile peace process can be destroyed by too much firepower used with too little finesse, just as it can be undermined by too little force used too cautiously.

In the spirit of the Brahimi report, and consistent with the British notion that PSOs do not use force to destroy adversaries, UN troops operating in the eastern
provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from mid-2005 onward took the initiative against remnants of the perpetrators of Rwanda’s genocide, in order to enforce compliance with recent promises made by their leaders regarding repatriation. Consistent with a concept of appropriate force and containment rather than defeat or destruction of an enemy, these operations destroyed the groups’ base camps—after warnings designed to allow fighters to flee—pushing fighters either away from populated areas or toward demobilization camps for repatriation.62

The British military’s intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 was undertaken in parallel with and in direct support of a then-trouble UN peace operation there, and in direct support of the Sierra Leone government against a number of armed gangs. British forces killed a number of armed gang members in the process of freeing several of their own number held hostage, and the demonstration effect of that encounter, rather than a concerted military campaign, led to the disintegration of the gang in question and to the disarmament of others. The British then stayed on, in reduced numbers, for some years to train and advise government forces. The initial British intervention bought time for the UN to reorient and restructure its own operation, which recovered its footing and ultimately went on to contribute significantly to the implementation of peace in the country. The UK operations thus helped to reinforce the power and legitimacy not only of the government but of the United Nations. They also enjoyed considerable legitimacy of their own: locally, owing to their support of an elected government against the armed gangs opposing it, and internationally, owing to a Security Council statement calling upon UN member states to provide such support.63

Carefully calibrated use of force and the international legitimacy conferred by due process of the UN Security Council or other established regional security organizations seem, as suggested earlier, to set peace operations apart from other military activities, whether unilateral or multi-party. In the case of interventions to impose peace, such authorization substitutes for the consent of the “host” government, makes the action taken more acceptable, politically, at least to the broader international community, and may complement and reinforce consent emerging from civil society within the state against which action is to be taken. But even invitational PSOs benefit from international endorsements and the legitimacy they confer, especially where an operation involves a security provider and a recipient of grossly disparate military and economic power. A regional or UN mandate defining the responsibilities and limiting the authority of that provider can be reassuring both to the recipient (as a political barrier to unlimited outside interference) and to the provider (as a tool to prevent mission
creep or the growth of unrealistic local expectations regarding outside aid). If and when the going gets rough, an international mandate is also a license to canvass for international help.

To the extent that the great powers define their own military activities in terms of limited warfare or low intensity conflict that does not entail the calibrated use of force or a perceived need for international legitimacy, they are describing something other than peace support operations. The US government is therefore correct to define the adjuvant functions of forces in combat zones as “stability operations” rather than PSOs.

Complexity creeps in, of course, in conflict zones that are only partly pacified, that fall back into conflict as a peace process stalls, that harbor parties who resist constraints on their illicit income, or that generate splinter groups who try to muscle their way into a share of political power. Part of a PSO may need to adopt a combat “stance” in which defeat or destruction of an enemy force is indeed temporarily required. Such has been the case for UN forces deployed in Ituri district, northeastern DRC, where a combination of die-hard militias, illicit business interests, and oblivious Ugandan authorities continued to fuel lucrative instability. A lethal ambush of UN peacekeepers in February 2005 resulted in a deliberate and even more lethal UN riposte, when forces again came under fire from the militia that set the ambush. The resulting battle killed 50–60 militia fighters. Beyond Ituri and the Kivus, however, UN operations in the DRC involve little or no proactive use of force and the whole operation is broadly invitational, deriving its welcome from a series of national-level peace accords as well as Security Council mandates.

It should be noted, however, that in the DRC, the forces brought into Ituri in mid-2003 and into the Kivus in late 2004 were specifically intended to help pacify their respective areas and were prepared to fight, if necessary. Although other UN troops already in the DRC were also redeployed to these more volatile areas, for various political and operational reasons they proved not as adaptable to the demands of peace enforcement.

In short, although great power military doctrines have been absorbing peace operations into a broader concept of military operations, PSOs still can and probably should be distinctly conceptualized, if only to differentiate—and protect—invitational operations. A PSO operates with international legitimacy derived from an international mandate, and with local legitimacy derived either from invitational language in a peace agreement or from the actions that it takes to curb deadly violence and protect a population. Its legitimacy is further enhanced to the extent that it trains and mentors local security forces to do the
same. Ideally, it enjoys the consent of all local parties initially but can work with partial absence of consent and should be prepared to deal with decayed consent. Legitimacy and consent are, to a PSO, what bolt-on armor is to an infantry fighting vehicle: both reduce the probability of catastrophic system failure. A PSO also uses the minimum force needed to protect and advance its mission objectives but may use it proactively, if necessary. Although it may need to act as a combat force in certain places and at certain times, combat is not its baseline “stance.” Should combat become a routine preoccupation, then the operation has transitioned from a PSO to something else, regardless of who mandated it or what that initial mandate said.