

Executive Summary

Ethics of Conduct for Peace and Stability Operations

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Smith Richardson Foundation junior faculty research grant
December 2008 – December 2009

ISSUE

The US military is increasingly focused on the pursuit of peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, and other peace and stability operations. This demands a transformation in our moral perspective, as well as military capacity. Peace and stability operations present a very different moral terrain than large-scale interstate conflict: the distinction between enemy forces and civilians is blurred, military forces are expected to protect civilian populations, culture and ideology are theaters of operations as important as the physical battlefield, and personnel in the field must exercise great autonomy. The literature on peace and stability operations has focused on questions of when and whether to go to war, while questions of moral conduct in peace and stability operations have received relatively less attention.

PROJECT

The general research question that this project poses is: what moral principles govern appropriate conduct for personnel in peacekeeping missions and other peace and stability operations?

Addressing the question of moral conduct for peace and stability operations requires a bottom-up approach that builds on the experiences of participants in the field, not just a cleverer application of abstract principles. Troops, police, and planners are often left to make difficult moral judgments with unclear guidance from their mandate, doctrine, or traditional just war principles. In so doing, they work through the moral issues in a way informed by “ground truth,” but not often captured in academic reflections. This project will draw on the experiences of personnel who have grappled with the moral challenges of peace and stability operations, and place them within a conceptual framework so that hard-won wisdom of those in the field can be shared, built upon for future practitioners, and critically assessed.

Peace and stability operations are likely to be multilateral missions, a fact recognized by the new Africa Command’s (AFRICOM) mandate to coordinate efforts on human security with African nations. To best address principles to the multinational context, the project will elicit the perspectives of both US and African personnel.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Developing ethical principles for peace and stability operations – and collecting and articulating the experiences of practitioners on the basis of which they are developed – should contribute to the development of doctrine and training materials that can help practitioners navigate the moral terrain of peace operations, as well as improve theoretical analysis.

The book will make three key contributions:

- Articulate and assess ethical principles developed in the particular context of peace and stability operations, and relevant to participants therein.
- Provide insight into the moral perspectives of participants from both planning and field levels, and from both US and African forces.
- Contribute to the development of theoretical literature on peace operations and just war theory.