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The Strategic Guidance Framework for International Police Peacekeeping: A role for Canada

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If Canada intends to reinvigorate its long coveted image as peacekeeper, any strategic response could include support to the UN Police (UNPOL) “Strategic Guidance Framework” for International Police Peacekeeping (SGF) as a logical, affordable and high profile marketing of “Brand Canada.”

Today about 13,000 police are deployed to 18 UN missions. Once monitors and reporters, police are now problem-solvers, mentors and trainers; protecting civilians, securing elections, investigating crime and fighting extremism. However, Police Contributing Countries (PCCs) represent widely diverse standards of justice and operational policing capacity that are weaknesses of police peacekeeping.

Since 2009 UNPOL has worked to develop a new policy foundation. UN PCCs were consulted to find, not “best” practices, but “good” practices they all could embrace as a collective policy for police peacekeeping. The product, the SGF, is a coherent framework ready to roll out as a foundation of the UN strategy for sustainable peace through justice and security. It includes guidelines for: capacity building, command and control, police operations and administration, and assures pre-deployment readiness and wider operational capabilities. Narrowing diversity among PCCs, it details skills and standards, and gives operational guidance for civilian-led “integrated” missions.

The SGF stresses transparency and accountability, principles of consent and impartiality, and only justified use of force. It is a global policing model, a model not influenced by biases, racism or corruption -- common maladies that creep into even well-founded systems. Underpinned by human rights, gender equality, protecting the vulnerable, combating violence and exploitation, and overarching community service, the SGF is a benchmark of fundamental “good practice” for any policing system.

By the 1990’s the changing nature of conflict, with intra-state conflict more common than inter-state, traditional peacekeeping grew to include alternative and inclusive strategies. The importance of fundamental justice as a foundation of sustainable security and state development was recognized. Today civilian police missions are often complex and dangerous, sometimes including executive to establish and sustain security, as well as mentoring, advising, training and building capacity toward sustainable local capacity development.

While the fundamental role of civilian police - internal security through enforcement of law and prevention of crime - is a universal idea, to “serve and protect” is interpreted differently around the world. Police resources and practice among UN member states represent widely diverse policing experience, expertise, techniques, training and skills. They come from different judicial systems, reflect different cultures, societies, religions, and languages. Today it is not uncommon for police missions to include officers from as many as 40 or more countries. Add to that reality persistent logistical challenges, dynamic and dangerous conflict environments, rotating contingent deployments, and national caveats where member states stipulate and even restrict the deployment assignments of their national police representatives, and the complex formula of police missions is better understood.

In a painstaking process to standardize and improve UN police performance, the UN has made concrete steps to identify roles, responsibilities, skills and competencies, and created a framework of strategic guidance for police contributions to peacekeeping missions. The result is the Strategic Guidance Framework for International Police Peacekeeping, a cohesive and coherent plan for United Nations Police to meet the challenges of the complex mandates of modern post-conflict.

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A path for Canada

This all presents a clear path for Canada to take a leadership role supporting UNDPKO. Canada is an experienced police peacekeeper, current in the “integrated mission model”, universally recognized for police professionalism, and a contributor to the development of the SGF. Moreover the SGF mirrors Canadian foreign policy priorities; human rights, gender equity; reducing sexual violence; protecting the vulnerable and refugees. As the UN prepares to roll out the SGF globally, it would welcome financial or administrative assistance, or direct human resources support like trainers, senior mentors, or subject matter experts.

Reference:

UN Police, Strategic Guidance Framework for International Police Peacekeeping: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/police/initiatives/framework.shtml>