Stress Management in Peace Operations

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July 2015

ABSTRACT

This study explores how the working environment and related stress factors in international peace operations affect German civilian experts who are seconded to missions of the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). It further discusses the types of support, which would mitigate the key stress factors that German secondees are experiencing. In contrast to the existing body of research on critical incident stress this study specifically focuses on cumulative, work-related stress factors and on the specific living conditions experienced in mission areas.

In a first step, we looked at stress factors that German civilian experts face. We also wanted to know how they deal with stress and what they do to improve their stress resilience. Our results show that the majority of cumulative stressors in peace operations are either related to "organizational, management factors" or to "job-related factors".

Second, we took a closer look at the organizational perspective of stress management and examined the staff care systems in place at EU, UN, and OSCE to ensure a proper duty of care. Although there is organizational awareness for the need for proper stress management, our results show that there is also room for improvement. This offers potential for Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) to get involved in stress management and actively boost morale and stress resilience of its seconded personnel in order to counter the negative effects of cumulative stress.

Executive Summary

The majority of cumulative stress factors experienced by civilian experts in peace operations are related to "organizational, management factors" and to "job-related factors". Civilian experts often struggle specifically with "management issues" that are connected with bureaucracy, decision-making processes, leadership problems as well as "HR issues". Furthermore, "tense relationships within the team" and times of "heavy workload or inactivity" represent major areas of concern and potentially lead to stress. In many cases the factors mentioned above play out together and can partially be related to the overarching topic that is the unresolved question of liabilities of the German government, the international organization, and the seconded civilian experts themselves regarding taxation, health care, and social security. This is aggravated by international organization and government shifting their respective duties towards the civilian experts upon the other. The interviews also show that individuals can do a lot to relieve their stress and improve their resilience. However, it is also the international organizations as well as the seconding agencies that can further bolster resilience by reducing their own impact on stress levels and actively support the seconded civilian experts.

Stress Management Systems in International Organizations

International organizations conducting peace operations acknowledge the importance of stress management. However, the actual implementation of stress management systems is at different stages of development, with the UN as leading example. While the UN has a complex staff care system in place and staff counselors in many missions, the EU has a Critical Incident Response Mechanism and limited staff counseling capacity implemented. It is currently establishing a peer support system. The OSCE response to critical incidents is not yet standardized and there are no other stress management systems in place.

Recommendations

Our results show that there are gaps in the international organizations' staff care and stress management systems throughout all phases of a German civilian experts' assignment. This offers potential for ZIF to get involved in stress management and actively boost morale and stress resilience of its seconded personnel in order to counter the negative effects of stress. Such a strategy could entail a clarification of all parties' (home country, mission, and secondee) liabilities regarding the tax, health care and social security situation of the secondee as well as resilience building prior to an assignment, active backing during, and a debriefing and ongoing support afterwards.

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List of Abbreviations

BAUA   German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
CISM   Critical incident stress management
CISMU   Critical Incident and Stress Management Unit
CIVCOM   Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management
CMPD   Crisis Management and Planning Directorate
CPCC   Civilian Planning and Conduct Capacity
DFS   Department of Field Support
DM   Department of Management
DSS   Department of Safety and Security
EEAS   European External Action Service
ENTRi   Europe's New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management
EPST   Emergency Preparedness and Support Team
EU   European Union
EULEX   European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo
FPD   Field Personnel Division
HEAT   Hostile Environment Awareness Trainings
HQ   Headquarters
HR   Human Resources
OHRM   Office of Human Resources Management
OSCE   Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PTSD   Post-traumatic stress disorder
SCO   Staff Counselor's Office
SOP   Standard operating procedure
UN   United Nations
UNDPKO   United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

1 The Importance of Managing Stress in Peace Operations

The impacts cumulative stress can have on the individual civilian expert should not be underestimated. Therefore, we describe cumulative and traumatic stress and point out the differences between the two. Additionally, we take a look at the concept of "duty of care" which is the guiding legal framework behind organizational stress management. We enrich the background further by analyzing relevant aspects of stress management guidelines in the related area of humanitarian aid work. Finally, we present the research methodology of this study.

1.1 Relevance and Background

Working in international peace operations is potentially stressful during all phases of a deployment. ZIF's seconded civilian experts often work in fast-paced and challenging working environments with little job security, away from home, sometimes in unstable host countries. In such a context, the question arises how does this affects the individual? Do experts themselves have the feeling that they are in a stressful situation? If so, how do they cope with it? Do they feel supported by their respective international organization and do they think that the German Federal Foreign Office as their seconding institution and ZIF as their counterpart back them?

The aim of this explorative study is twofold: (1) to get a first qualitative assessment of stress factors that civilian experts face and (2) to explore what is done for them in terms of organizational stress management.

In this stock-taking exercise, we have focused on cumulative stressors instead of critical incident stress reactions. The latter are commonly recognized as potentially threatening to personnel in peace operations and mechanisms to deal with them have been established by international organizations and seconding states. In contrast, less light has been shed on cumulative stress and its effects on the personal well-being and performance of civilian experts in peace operations. From a human resources management perspective, we consider a holistic approach to staff care that also covers cumulative stress factors as an essential part of the duty of care.

Duty of Care

It is not only the responsibility of the individual civilian expert to preserve their physical and mental health but also an obligation for their employing organization to take necessary precautions. When it comes to international peace operations, there

is always the question of whose obligation it is to enact the so-called "duty of care"[1] for seconded personnel. A legal definition of the term states that "[i]ndividuals and organizations have legal obligations to act towards others and the public in a prudent and cautious manner to avoid the risk of reasonably foreseeable injury to others. This obligation may apply both to acts and omissions."[2]

- Seconded personnel is deployed by their seconding state/national organization and they are not employees of the international organization itself. Therefore, the duty of care lies with that expert's seconding body to some extent.
- Additionally, by allowing a civilian peace operation in their country, the respective host government technically takes over the responsibility to protect international personnel on their territory.[3] However, typically countries in need of international assistance are barely able to protect their own populations let alone international staff.
- Finally, the mission and/or international organization technically has the authority over that person and should therefore have the obligation to protect them as well.

The topic "duty of care" has gained considerable attention recently and critical incidents have shown that affected staff members are taken care of, although standard operating procedures (SOPs) are not fully established yet. Nevertheless, the situation is somewhat less clear when it comes to work-related problems such as cumulative stress factors. Who is responsible when staff members are confronted with the impacts of everyday stress on their personal well-being?

Cumulative vs. Critical Stress

The problem of duty of care becomes apparent when comparing traumatic to cumulative stress. While cumulative stress is based on daily stress factors a person is exposed to, traumatic stress is usually related to solitary critical incidents such as terrorist attacks, bombings, abductions, or sexual violence. Such borderline experiences can lead to PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) in extreme cases if not treated timely and appropriately.

In case of critical incidents international organizations have learned to react quickly and provide emergency medical and psychological care. In the course of our empirical research it became apparent that the situation for individuals suffering from cumulative stress is somewhat different.

Dealing with "everyday" stress factors even seems to be marginalized by critical incident stress management (CISM) and therefore not accepted as equally important, despite the fact that the interviewed staff counselors regard it as highly relevant. Stress management in international organizations, if available at all, is oftentimes

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[1]   Andrea de Guttry: Duty of Care of the EU and its Member States towards Their Personnel Deployed in International Missions, in: Studi sull'integrazione europea, VII (2012). P. 265.

[2]   Ibid. p. 266.

[3]   Cf. ibid. pp. 264-265.

reactive by design and does not equally provide preemptive support, which would be needed for dealing with ongoing everyday stress.

Additionally, our interview results seem to indicate that some of the international organizations even use critical incidents and traumatic stress to devaluate cumulative stress related to "everyday" mission life as private problems of the individual. However, one of the expert even described cumulative stress as the most dangerous type. Despite that, it is oftentimes only dealt with unofficially by counselors. There seems to be a tendency in management to disguise cumulative stress and link it to critical incidents or even claim it non-existent.

Impacts of Stress

Stress is not necessarily a negative but rather a normal reaction of the human body to stress factors or to external stimuli. In general it enables a human being to react properly to a challenging or even dangerous situation for a short period of time.[4]

However, this study focuses on the negative aspects of stress and its impacts on the well-being of civilian experts. As soon as there is a constant strain over a longer period of time the related stress can be harmful to the human body and psyche because the affected person does not have the chance to process the stress hormones and refill their reserves. This can result in physical or psychological disorders or even more serious conditions.

Stressors can already occur in the preparatory phase of an assignment because a lot of arrangements have to be made. At the same time, civilian experts need time to bid their farewells appropriately. Once the deployment starts, a plethora of new impressions in combination with getting used to a new work environment have the potential to be stressful. Throughout the deployment, intercultural difficulties, problems with colleagues or superiors, a lack of security on the ground, or even critical incidents illustrate numerous sources for stress. Even the post-deployment phase might be stressful to an individual due to difficulties in re-adapting to their home and reviving relations with family members and friends.[5]

If a person is overburdened by various stress factors not only their personal well-being is endangered but also their ability to perform on their job. However, there are ways to cope with stress and strengthen personal resilience to stress. It can already help to set realistic goals as well as to create boundaries between work and personal life. Civilian experts who are able to manage their stress can preserve their physical, mental and social skills, their health, their professional competence, and maybe most importantly in the light of their profession: their values. This in turn means that they

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[4]   Cf. United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO): UN Stress Management Booklet. New York 1995. P. 20.

[5]   Cf. Monika Henke and Daria Nashat: Stress im Einsatz. Praxishandbuch für zivile Fachkräfte. Berlin, 2014. Pp. 31-43.

can protect their "work ability"[6], which ultimately, preserves the capacity of their respective mission to perform its tasks and achieve its goals.

1.2 Guidelines on Organizational Stress Management

The scope of this study does not only entail a qualitative analysis of personal experiences of German civilian experts but also an assessment of organizational stress management capabilities at EU, UN, and OSCE. The guidelines for a sustainable strategy to manage stress in humanitarian aid work proposed by the Dutch-based ANTARES Foundation entails valuable recommendations on what an organization can do for its staff in order to fulfil its duty of care. They allow for a comparison between what is actually done and what could be done in terms of stress management. The ANTARES approach can be described as a cycle that consists of eight principles. These principles are measured by a set of indicators to allow for continuous monitoring.[7]

Highly relevant for the purpose of this study is to find out whether the international organizations have an actual strategy and policies on stress management, potentially even laid-down in their staff care regulations. Additionally, it is important to see what kind of support EU, UN, and OSCE offer for their seconded personnel while these people are on assignment. Also, what kind of backing do the international organizations offer to their secondees in the pre- and post-assignment phases? The ANTARES approach describes that stress management begins prior to deployment and does not end once a work contract is fulfilled or a mission closes down. If there are gaps concerning preparation before and support after deployment the question arises what a seconding agency can do to fill them? Against the backdrop of these questions the following excerpts from the ANTARES guidelines are especially applicable:

- Any organization that aims at establishing a working stress management system needs to have a written policy in place. This encompasses a clear understanding of how stress can impact its staff and how staff support can be integrated "into the organization's operational framework".[8]
- The organization needs to make sure that all personnel get the appropriate training, including modules on stress and how to cope with it, prior to deployment.
- The agency needs to have a system in place that allows for a constant monitoring of the staff's "response to stress", including face-to-face conversations of managers and staff, "group stress evaluation sessions" as well as "informal observations".[9]

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[6] http://www.arbeitsfaehigkeit.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php?arbeitsfaehigkeit, accessed on 08/12/2014.

[7] Cf. ANTARES Foundation: Managing stress in humanitarian workers. Guidelines for good practice. Third Edition. Amsterdam, 2012. Pp. 14-34.

[8] Ibid. P. 14.

[9] All quotes: ibid. p. 22.

- Any kind of support and training should not be restricted to the pre-assignment phase. Instead it should be provided continuously, including self-care training, team building exercises, resolving team conflicts, and creating "organizational practices"[10] that reduce stress.
- The "post assignment support"[11] should be clearly structured to provide a follow-up and ongoing assistance to staff members after their assignment. Stress and its adverse effects do not simply go away just because deployments are over. "Peer support networks" as well as psychological support can be part of such a scheme.

1.3 Methodology

During the initial phase of the study we conducted a literature review, collected information within our own organization ZIF, and participated in our organization's returnee event in order to get an overview of the topic and generate first hypotheses.

As a second step, the main bulk of data was generated in hour-long semi-structured telephone or personal interviews with German civilian experts. They are secondees of ZIF/the German Federal Foreign Office. The questionnaire design is grounded on the initial hypotheses and specifically influenced by preliminary conversations with civilian experts during the returnee event. It is enriched with details from the "Stressreport Deutschland 2012"[12] survey.

The analysis of the interview results is based on an enriched version of Blanchetière's model of stress factors for humanitarian aid workers. She divides stress factors into four categories: (1) situational factors, (2) job-related factors, (3) organizational, management factors, and (4) personal risk factors.[13]

In addition to the stress factors mentioned by Blanchetière our own research has shown that there are additional factors contributing to stress for civilian experts in international peace operations. These additions are in italics in Figure 1 below. For a thorough and also temporally differentiated analysis, assignments in peacekeeping operations were divided into three phases: before, during, and after.[14] Not all stress factors are relevant for all phases of an assignment. In addition to the stress factors we also identified supporting factors that can increase a person's resilience to stress, based on the interview results as well as the "Stressreport Deutschland 2012".

[10] ANTARES Foundation: Managing stress in humanitarian workers. Guidelines for good practice. Third Edition. Amsterdam, 2012. P. 24.

[11] Ibid. p. 33.

[12] A study on work-related stress in Germany conducted by the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Anja Hall and Anke Siefer: Stressreport Deutschland 2012. Fragebogen. Dortmund, Berlin, Dresden 2012.

[13] Cf. Pascale Blanchetière: Resilience of Humanitarian Workers. 2006. P. 4.

[14] Cf. John H. Ehrenreich, and Teri L. Elliot: Managing Stress in Humanitarian Aid Workers: A Survey of Humanitarian Aid Agencies' Psychosocial Training and Support of Staff, in: Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 2004. Pp. 64-66. and ANTARES Foundation: Managing stress in humanitarian workers. Guidelines for good practice. Third Edition. Amsterdam, 2012.

Situational factors

- Insecurity
- Attacks on personal well-being
- surrounding poverty and violence
- Demanding relations with populations, local authorities
- Health risks, poor facilities

Job-related factors

- Difficult living conditions
- Dislocation: social, cultural, spiritual
- Heavy wokload or inactivity
- Tense relationships wihin the team
- Job insecurity

Stress Factors

Organizational, management factors

- HR issues on preparation and follow-up
- Management issues
- Unclear program roles and objectives
- Sector culture 'macho'
- *Abusive or weak leadership*
- *Corruption*

Personal risk factors

- Limited contact / pressure from home
- Lack of experience
- Unrealistic expectations and motivations
- Psychological history
- *Re-entry Syndrome*

Figure 1: Overview stress factors, based on Blanchetière (2006)

Situational factors

- Welcoming local environment
- Intercultural cooperation

Job-related factors

- Freedom to implement own ideas
- Possibility to control working hours
- Challenging & enjoyable tasks
- Quick promotions & responsiblie
- Engagement, value, and meaning of 'working for a great cause'

Resilience

Organizational, management factors

- Support from leadership
- Support from organization (IO/mission and/or seconding state)
- Psychological support

Personal factors

- Good collaboration with colleagues & mutual support
- Support group/peers/friends in the mission
- Support from family/friends at home
- Self-care

Figure 2: Overview resilience factors, author's illustration

We employed the gatekeeper approach to generate the sample of interview partners. For this purpose we obtained lists of names from respective ZIF desk officers in charge of the different international organizations (UN, EU, OSCE) and then contacted potential respondents via email. Another criterion for sampling was that the interviewees should either be currently on assignment or have returned recently. In some cases we made exceptions to be able to cover all three international organizations.

Geographically, we decided that the majority of the interviewees should be from missions located in Southeastern Europe and Central Asia, with the exception of the UN interviewees who served entirely in Africa. The reason behind these selections was to focus on missions that are not located in high-risk areas in order to have a stronger emphasis on cumulative stressors.

The sample n=18 (out of 21 requests) is composed of three respondents from UN peace operations, nine from EU missions, and six from OSCE missions. However, many of the interviewees actually served in two or in all three organizations and therefore the separation becomes somewhat blurred. At the same time this allowed for valuable comparisons in some of the interviews. Ten respondents are female and eight are male and on average they are 48 years old. Five respondents are between 30 and 40, six are between 40 and 50, five between 50 and 60, and two respondents are between 60 and 70 years old. Out of all interviewees five have only been on one assignment. The majority has had previous mission experience. While two have worked in two missions, the rest has served in more than three missions (up to six). Out of all interviewees eight respondents have served in middle or senior management positions and have had personnel responsibilities.

In a third step we conducted a number of expert interviews on the phone using a number of guiding questions that are based on our research goals and on a survey employed by Ehrenreich and Elliott for their study on stress management in humanitarian aid.[15] Our interview partners work at the UN, EU, and OSCE and are either staff counselors in the field or responsible for stress management at the respective headquarters. In sum we talked to three staff counselors in the field as well as five subject matter experts at the headquarters of UN, EU, and OSCE.

[15] Cf. John H. Ehrenreich, and Teri L. Elliot: Managing Stress in Humanitarian Aid Workers: A Survey of Humanitarian Aid Agencies' Psychosocial Training and Support of Staff, in: Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 2004. Pp. 64-66.

2 Stress Factors in Peace Operations – The Results

This chapter presents the results of the interviews with German civilian experts. An overview is followed by a more detailed analysis of all phases of an assignment. The "During the Assignment" phase is enriched with experiences of staff counselors that we interviewed. "Organizational, management factors" and "job-related" factors represent the bulk of stress factors throughout all phases of deployment. In addition to these results, the underlying stress factor "ambiguous liabilities" in peace operations is discussed at the end of the chapter.

2.1 Overview

The interviews have shown that a broad array of stress factors for civilian experts is present in peace operations. In general, it can be noted that most of the abovementioned stress factors described by Blanchetière for humanitarian aid workers are also relevant for civilian experts. When it comes to the latter group of individuals the main emphasis throughout all phases of an assignment was put on "organizational, management factors", which were mentioned as a stress factor 63 times. Additionally, 54 responses referred to "job-related factors", while only 22 answers can be related to situational factors. Least mentioned are topics situated among "personal risk factors" (12 mentions).
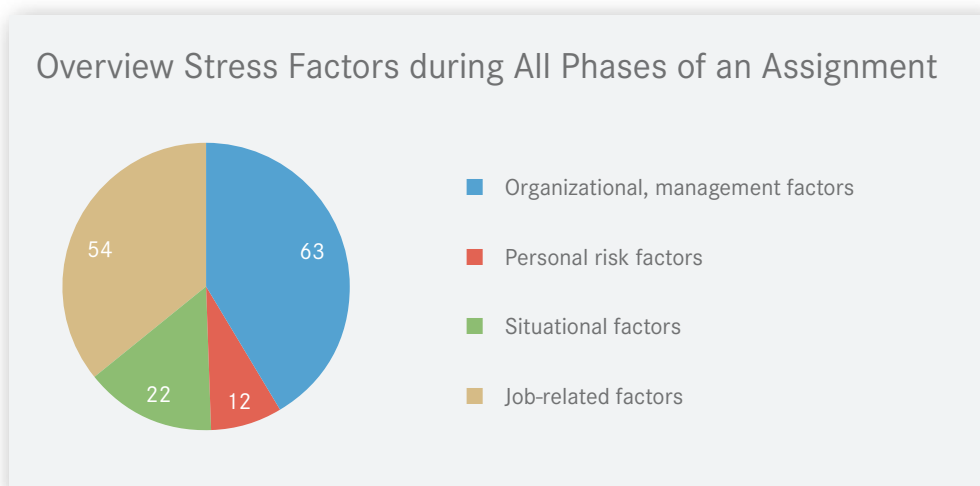

Figure 3: Results stress factors during all phases of an assignment

In Table 1 the stress factors are broken up into the most important sub-factors to gain more detailed insights into the issues leading to stress for civilian experts. This

first overview hints at a pattern: internal structural challenges within the mission play a major role among the daily stress factors during all phases of assignment.

Stress Factor	Sub-factor	Mentions
Organizational, management factor	Management issues (bureaucracy, decision-making process)	23
Job-related factor	Tense relationships with the team	18
Job-related factor	Heavy workload or inactivity	12
Situational factor	Demanding relations with populations, local authorities	8
Situational factor	Health risks, poor facilities	7
Personal risk factor	Limited contact with home, pressure from home during the assignment and pressure from home before/after assignment	5

Table 1: Specific stress factors during all phases of an assignment

The majority, around four fifths, of stress factors was found during the assignment. Nevertheless, a holistic view on the deployment process shows that there are already stressors that influence civilian experts before being in the field, as well as those that they have to deal with once they return to Germany or move on to another assignment. For this reason the chapter is divided into three parts, depicting stress factors before, during and after deployment to allow for a more differentiated analysis.

Broadly speaking, stressors in the phase before assignment are mostly connected to "organizational, management factors", i.e. related to the lack of time between getting the job and actual deployment or unresolved bureaucratic matters. During the assignment "organizational, management factors" still play a large role as sources for stress. Equally important are directly "job-related factors" and to a lesser extent "situational factors", which refer to the fact of being in a foreign country, often in a fragile political and institutional situation. In the phase after returning from a deployment the picture is somewhat less clear. However, it is striking that "personal risk factors", connected to the difficulties of re-adapting to the German environment, play a comparatively large role.

2.2 Pre-assignment

The majority of stress factors ahead of deployment mentioned by the interviewees was related to "organizational, management factors", as depicted in Figure 4 below. Out of these ten statements, eight referred to a range of HR issues.

Figure 4: Results stress factors pre-assignment

The civilian experts reported serious problems in the preparatory phase before the assignment. Several felt a lack of support from the German Foreign Office or the respective international organization. Often they did not feel well informed on their actual job description, what specific equipment would be required (i.e. protective gear, medication, mosquito net), or on other on peculiarities of a host country. One example for the latter was the need to bring large amounts of cash in 50 and 100 USD bills in order to survive since the host country does not have ATMs nor do people accept smaller bills due to forgery. In other cases, negligent HR processes hampered a smooth transition because the paperwork was incomplete, e.g. the necessary service passport was not issued on time, despite an early application from the interviewee.

Furthermore, there were cases, in which the pre-assignment phase turned out to be highly stressful because the interviewees only had very limited time to prepare after they were informed by the international organization about their deployment at very short notice. Moreover, interviewees mentioned that the mission leadership was not willing to compromise on a starting date due to the urgency of assignment. In some cases there was only one week time between acceptance and starting date of the job. Other civilian experts described situations prior to deployment in which the mission was either unable or unwilling to let them know where they would be stationed in the host country. This was especially stressful because the country was in turmoil and being stationed in some areas could have represented a threat to personal security.

The need for absolute flexibility was described as very stressful and is basically only possible when a person is unemployed or at least is fortunate enough that their current jobs end within this brief window of opportunity. From an HR management perspective this is troublesome, especially in combination with the statement that some interviewees regard themselves as somewhat incompatible to the German labor market. These individuals basically depend on a mission job, despite the obstacles.

2.3 During the Assignment

2.3.1 Interview Results

As mentioned in the introductory sub-chapter, the majority of cumulative stress factors can be attributed to the deployment phase. Stressors start to occur during the transition phase already, especially if there were organizational problems beforehand, such as information deficits regarding the mission and its peculiarities or a lack of time to prepare. In addition, our interviewees reported that some missions did not prepare for their arrival (e.g. no housing was provided in missions with a compound). Civilian experts who had previous mission experience and contacts reported that personal connections prevented the worst by organizing accommodations and other basic necessities.
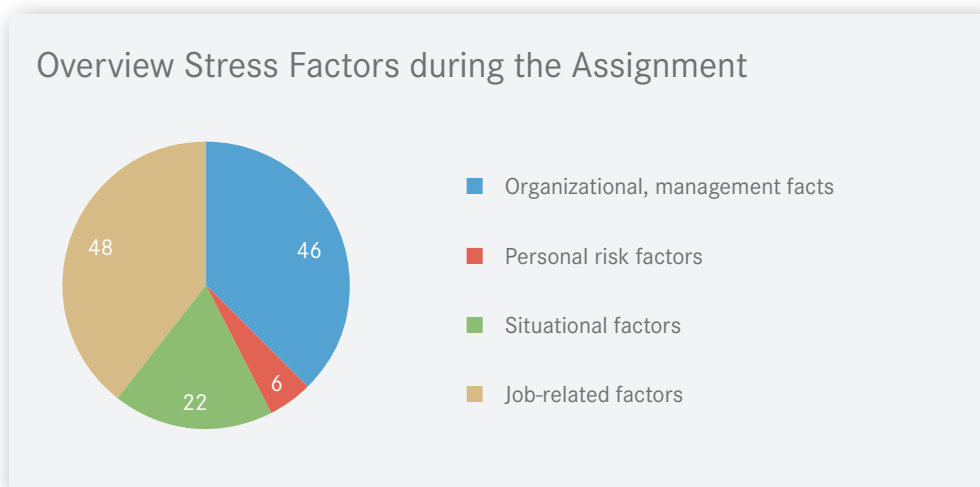

Overview Stress Factors during the Assignment

- Organizational, management facts
- Personal risk factors
- Situational factors
- Job-related factors

48 46 22 6

Figure 5: Results stress factors during an assignment

Similar to the overall results, around three-quarters of the issues reported either concern "job-related factors" or "organizational, management factors".

Table 2 below describes the major stressors in more detail:

Stress Factor	Sub-factor	Mentions
Job-related factor	Tense relationships with the team	18
Job-related factor	Heavy workload or inactivity	12
Job-related factor	Job insecurity	9
Organizational, management factor	Management issues (bureaucracy, decision-making process)	19
Organizational, management factor	HR issues	11
Organizational, management factor	Abusive or weak leadership	11
Situational factor	Demanding relations with populations, local authorities	8
Situational factor	Health risks, poor facilities	7
Situational factor	Insecurity and attacks on personal well-being	6
Personal risk factor	Limited contact with home, pressure from home	3

Table 2: Specific stress factors during an assignment

Job-related Factors | Several civilian experts mentioned that they suffered most from "tense relationships with the team". More specifically, some felt victimized by harassment among the team members. In certain situations unclear power structures and hidden interests led to harassment. Others felt that the daily fights in their workplace took too much of their time and productivity or they were confronted with colleagues unfit for duty or with personal problems, who managed to derail entire teams with unfounded accusations.

A common topic was the diversity of teams, being international, or consisting of civilians and military staff, in combination with different outlooks concerning the respective mission, which led to internal friction. In addition to that several interviewees mentioned the heavy workload, sometimes getting them close to collapse. Likewise they sometimes suffered from the opposite: unclear roles and lack of work.

Organizational, Management Factors | As shown above "organizational, management factors" are a constant source of cumulative stress for many interviewees. Some of them had to deal with incomprehensible security requirements or other bureaucratic obstacles, while others had to handle mismanagement and continuous grandstanding of superiors at the expense of actual decisions.

In other situations the organizations did not react to internal crises on the ground and in one example one of them was not able to support its staff after the unexpected and sudden demise of a senior staff member. As a result the mission was collectively in shock that also led to individual stress.

"HR issues" can roughly be divided up into two parts: issues within the international organization and problems with the seconding organization, namely the German Federal Foreign Office. With regard to the German authorities, some civilian experts mentioned that they felt neglected by the Foreign Office and that their worries while being deployed were not addressed. These worries were related to topics such as taxation, health care, and social security (cf. chapter 2.5). Concerning their respective international organization the experts mentioned that unclear regulations on working hours in combination with impractical vacation regimes led to unbearable workloads.

The third major area of "organizational, management factors" refers to problems in leadership. Some civilian experts told of managers who seemed indifferent and lacked interest in their staff and their job. As a result they were unable to lead, make decisions, or even support staff members appropriately in internal conflict situations. On the other end of the scale our interviewees described superiors who micromanaged their staff or demanded 24/7 availability. In addition to that others reported "abusive leadership" that either entailed bullying of subordinates or even sexual harassment. One civilian expert put it this way: managers in peace operations are often simply not fit to fulfil leadership tasks.

Situational Factors | When it comes to "situational factors" the relations with local authorities and the population were described as challenging. It was reported that local authorities gave trouble to civilian experts by only handing out short-term visas and therefore creating a lot of insecurity and to a certain extent disillusionment. It was also stated that the cooperation with the authorities was either overly time-consuming or somewhat frustrating due to different work ethics and local hierarchical thinking.

Another set of "situational factors" relates to the living and working environment. The interviewees mentioned pollution (air, water), traffic as well as tough working conditions in their respective offices (noise levels, open-space offices) as stressors. Several were also worried about the sub-standard health care systems in their host countries in case of medical emergencies.

Personal Risk Factors | While "personal risk factors" were mentioned least it is still valuable to take a more detailed look at them. Especially the distance to and demands from home (friends and families) lead to stress among the civilian experts. Others were confronted with various degrees of poor self-care behavior and witnessed high levels of alcohol consumption among their mission co-workers, or they had to deal with colleagues who seemed to have had prior unresolved psychological problems and struggled with those while being on a demanding assignment.

2.3.2   Experiences of Staff Counselors in the Field

Aside from interviewing civilian experts we also talked to EU and UN staff counselors who described a number of stress factors that they see in their daily work and which correspond to our findings and add new facets. The remarks from the staff

counselors have similar emphases and primarily focus on "organizational, management factors", "job-related factors", especially job insecurity, as well as "situational factors". In EU missions, there is a focus on the "organizational, management factors" described as inherent to a specific organizational culture. While at t the UN there is a bigger emphasis on "situational and job-related factors" such as security problems, corruption, or harassment at the workplace.

The staff counselors told us about a large array of different cumulative stressors. Among them are security concerns, the daily office work, management and inner-organizational issues such as an overly bureaucratized environment, hierarchical thinking, conflicts with superiors or co-workers, discrimination of local staff, and discrimination in general. More extremely the aforementioned problems can lead to harassment, abuse of authority, and abuse of male authority towards females and sexual violence.

Job-related Factors | Job insecurity is a significant component of the stress mix and relates to the mission logic, which refers to the tentative nature of missions. The ultimate aim is to leave the host country as soon as possible. The evolution of any mission is characterized by these uncertainties and this has an impact on the organizational culture. Usually, missions start out with a pre-planned structure. Depending on the necessities on the ground as well as political decisions and goals, missions then show a certain fluidity over time regarding their size, shape and actual tasks. On the one hand this variability creates stress for managers because they are the ones who have to take the blame for any changes. On the other hand it leads to a lot of anxiety and stress among staff members because oftentimes this change means downsizing, especially in a mission's drawdown phase, thus endangering their jobs. It even impairs organizational efficiency simply because people constantly have to consider new employment options, commonly in other missions.

Altogether, one fact is particularly striking: many civilian staff members have a home country but not really a home anymore because they chose the international mission life and being "global cosmopolitans". As a result they have no real home base where they can go to deal with their (stress-induced) problems afterwards. However, these people are often affected by unresolved traumatic events from previous mission experience. This creates an even higher necessity for counseling during assignments.

Organizational, Management Factors | Management issues relate to the fact that mission staff are oftentimes not integrated in decision-making processes, which can give them the feeling to be cut off of information flows and even deprive them of the meaning of their job. Some are under the impression that their work is meaningless and that nobody really cares about what they are doing. Besides that, daily office life is made difficult by the subtleties of the different contractual statuses and therefore a source of stress. International civilian staff, though separated into contracted and seconded, depend on the mission jobs, while civil servants have much more job security because they are seconded to the mission for a limited timeframe and return

to their old job once they are back in their home country. This holds potential for conflicts among the various staff categories due to their different contractual statuses.

Personal Risk Factors | Furthermore, the limited contact with home is frequently displayed by relationship problems of personnel working at non-family duty stations: occasionally, staff members start a new relationship in the mission, or it happens that their partner at home has an affair. At times conflicts in intimate relationships in the mission occur, in extreme cases resulting in domestic violence among nationals as well as internationals. All of the above can result in the loss of family or relationships.

Additionally, corruption is very relevant as a stressor, especially to staff in middle-management, whose ethical standards might be conflicting with those of corrupt superiors. Such inevitable dilemmas can be hard to cope with.

2.4 Post-assignment

In the post-deployment phase returnees are potentially prone to what McCreesh calls "Re-entry Syndrome"[16] or what is also referred to as "reverse culture shock"[17]. These concepts cover a wide array of issues and help characterizing the responses given by our civilian experts. The Re-entry Syndrome describes the transition phase for an individual directly after returning from an assignment in a different culture. Experience has shown that the first days are characterized by "euphoria". Soon afterwards many returnees "experience feelings of loss, bereavement and isolation"[18] and are under the impression that their surroundings either do not really care about their experiences or are not able to comprehend them. In certain cases individuals suffering from the Re-Entry Syndrome can be prone to the abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

Personal Risk Factors | Four of our interviewees showed indications of what can be regarded as similar to the Re-entry Syndrome. This area is covered by the set of "personal risk factors" (five mentions). It was especially stressful that their friends and family, although happy to see them, did not fully grasp their experiences, or worse, seemed not to care about their stories and expected the returnee to integrate into 'normal' life soon after arrival. Others felt isolated and it was difficult for them to come to terms with the loss of their special social status having been part of a mission (i.e. being in constant contact to dignitaries and decision-makers). Back at home they felt like they were just a 'nobody'.In combination with missing the international working environment some interviewees simply concluded that they should return to a mission as soon as possible.

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[16]   Pascale Blanchetière: Resilience of Humanitarian Workers. 2006. P. 8.

[17]   Center for Intercultural Learning, Canadian Foreign Service Institute: Staff Reintegration Following High-Risk Missions. Good Practices in Supporting International Development and Aid Workers. P. 15.

[18]   Pascale Blanchetière: Resilience of Humanitarian Workers. 2006. P. 8.

Organizational, Management Factors | Aside from the "personal risk factors" the bulk of stress factors after the mission can be traced back to "organizational, management factors" (seven mentions), mostly connected to "HR issues" or "management issues (bureaucracy, decision-making process)". It was described during the interviews that dealing with the German Federal Employment Agency was highly unpleasant because personnel there was either not knowledgeable or simply unhelpful. Additionally, some had a feeling of injustice because German police or soldiers who serve abroad, are apparently treated better than the civilian experts themselves.

The interviewees also mentioned "HR issues" as stressors. Some had hoped for an open exchange during their debriefings with officials from the German Federal Foreign Office in order to address their worries and issues. However, they gained the impression that their counterparts were seemingly lacking information about their mission or their social status, as well as their uncertain tax and social security situation (cf. chapter 2.5).

Figure 6: Results stress factors post-assignment

Job-related Factors | Additionally, "job-related factors" played a role and were mentioned five times during the interviews. The civilian experts felt dislocated when they came back to Germany. Job insecurity and re-integration into the German labor market also proved stressful to several interviewees. In this regard, they mentioned enervating waiting periods before they found another job.

2.5 Ambiguous Liabilities –
A Constant Stress Factor

As already shown above, certain "HR issues" and "management issues (bureaucracy, decision-making process)" lead to subliminal or sometimes direct stress for our interviewees. Different individuals have different ways of dealing with it. However, the sources are similar and can be traced back to the fact that the employment status of

seconded civilian experts and the associated liabilities are somewhat unclear. Some feel that they literally 'sit on the fence' between the international organization and the German Federal Foreign Office, being the seconding organization. The ambiguity of this situation stems from the fact that civilian experts are seconded by their respective home country and sent on an assignment. Despite the contract with their country's seconding agency, which is in the German case not a labor contract but a contract sui generis based on the German secondment law, offering financial, some social security and health care support, they are entirely subject to the mission they serve in. As a result the civilian experts are caught between rivaling demands of their native country and said mission. At the same time both sides shift their respective duties towards the civilian experts upon the other, which, in turn, results in a lack of support for the secondees.

When comparing themselves to secondees from other countries as well as German police and soldiers who serve in the field with them and get the impression that others receive much more institutional backing when they prepare for and serve in an assignment. This applies to critical incidents after which the care-taking seems to be better for soldiers and police but also to more mundane things such as appropriate clothing, personal security equipment (i.e. flak jackets), other gear or appropriate medication for the respective host country. Corrections officers explained to us that they had to buy uniforms themselves because they were a requirement from the international organization but not issued to them from Germany in contrast to soldiers and police, who seem to receive all the necessary gear and clothing.

A recurrent topic in numerous interviews were unclear or unfavorable policies regarding seemingly basic organizational topics such as taxation, health care and pension plans. Taxation seems to be the most striking issue and was identified as a stress factor by interviewees on assignment as well as by returnees. In light of recent critical incidents some were even worried whether they would be taken care of afterwards, especially when it comes to long-term medical treatment. Moreover, it was mentioned that the quality and extent of health insurance differs between international organizations, leading to worries concerning personal health emergencies and related costs.

In summary, the ambiguity of liabilities, an absence of longer-term job and only partial social security, a lack of information, and the shortage of support and backup structures during all phases of a mission seem to aggravate the situation of seconded civilian experts. It appears as if some of our interviewees were under the impression that seconding and international organizations demand of them to be well-educated and always available. At the same time, the very same institutions are not willing to offer sustainable job perspectives or substantial support to cover personal and job-related risks.

3 Resilience in Peace Operations – The Results

With regard to the array of stress factors that the civilian experts have to face during an assignment we wondered what keeps them going. Are there any supporting factors that help individuals to protect themselves and preserve their work ability, even in a tough environment? This chapter describes the theoretical background and gives an overview over the interview results as to how civilian experts deal with stress during all phases of an assignment.

3.1 Background

The key to successfully dealing with stress is resilience, which can also be described as a person's strength when facing demanding life events. Research shows three dimensions of resilience:

- stress resistance in challenging situations,
- rather rapid recovery from crisis situations, and
- the ability to reconfigure behavior, emotions as well as cognitions when faced with challenging events or afterwards.

Even individuals that have developed these resilience mechanisms are still prone to stress reactions. However, they are able to process these experiences rather unscathed and can even use them for personal growth. It should be noted that resilience can be regarded as the interplay of various factors related to a person's interaction with their environment, stage of life, subjective perception of a stressor, and the specific sphere of life that is touched upon.[19]

In order to have an appropriate framework for analysis, we generated a set of resilience supporting factors based on the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) annual study on stress in the workplace.[20] In addition to stressors, this study explores supporting factors and we used BAuA's examples to find out whether similar factors are visible in peace operations.

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[19] Cf. Jürgen Bengel, and Lisa Lyssenko: Resilienz und psychologische Schutzfaktoren im Erwachsenenalter. Stand der Forschung zu psychologischen Schutzfaktoren von Gesundheit im Erwachsenenalter, in: Forschung und Praxis in der Gesundheitsförderung, 43. Köln, 2012. Pp. 24-28.

[20] Cf. Andrea Lohmann-Haislah: Stressreport Deutschland 2012. Stressreport Deutschland 2012. Psychische Anforderungen, Ressourcen und Befinden. Dortmund, Berlin, Dresden 2012.

Situational factors

- Welcoming local environment
- Intercultural cooperation

Job-related factors

- Freedom to implement own ideas
- Possibility to control working hours
- Challenging & enjoyable tasks
- Quick promotions & responsiblie
- Engagement, value, and meaning of 'working for a great cause'

Resilience

Organizational, management factors

- Support from leadership
- Support from organization (IO/mission and/or seconding state)
- Psychological support

Personal factors

- Good collaboration with colleagues & mutual support
- Support group/peers/friends in the mission
- Support from family/friends at home
- Self-care

Figure 7: Overview resilience factors, author's illustration

Our results show that some of BAuA's supporting factors also play a role for civilian experts in missions, but we found additional supporting factors (see Figure 7 above). As was the case with stress factors, the majority, again around four fifths of support factors identified in the interviews, can be attributed to the deployment phase.

3.2 Results

Organizational, Management Factors | Since organizations are potentially able to considerably affect an individual's stress levels (cf. Figure 1: Overview Stress Factors, based on Blanchetière (2006)) it should be noted that the factor "support from organization" points at a double potential on the organizational side.

Organizations can bolster resilience by reducing their negative impacts on stress levels as well as actively boost morale. The international organizations and the seconding agencies/countries simply play an important role when it comes to stress and how to avoid it.

With regard to "support from the organization" the interviewees found a good relationship with ZIF during deployment very helpful. In addition trainings before joining a mission as well as the returnee meeting afterwards were seen as supportive. Others referred to having a good relationship to their organization's headquarters as good backup in case of difficulties in the mission or mentioned that their mission had staff counselors who were approached by a number of their colleagues.

Personal Factors | "Self-care" describes a broad yet important spectrum of topics. Some civilian experts stated that it was very helpful for them to be physically active

in their spare time and to find a sustainable work-life balance. This includes activities like jogging, hiking in their host country on their days off or practicing yoga but also cooking, writing some sort of travel journal, or taking up academic studies.

With respect to the time after a deployment, different coping strategies were mentioned such as taking a break, accepting the challenges connected to the return and focusing on personal psychological hygiene, or avoiding the re-entry syndrome by simply travelling and vacationing abroad for several weeks instead of staying in Germany.

Having a social network like a "support group/peers/friends during the mission" is closely related to "self-care". Several of the interviewees deemed it important to have confidantes or even "soul mates" with whom they could share their work and personal experiences or who would be available to simply hang out and spend quality time together. In other cases, the civilian experts started to build a group of peers in their mission with whom they tried to process the daily events in order to avoid traumatization from gruesome external events.

Finally, the role of "support from family/friends (at home)" should not be underestimated. Several of the interviewees mentioned that they were grateful to their family for the ongoing support and appreciation. The ones who had the opportunity to work at a family duty station described having their family there as sometimes stressful but generally rewarding.

Job-related Factors | A "good collaboration with colleagues and mutual support" is also important. Having a good and reliable team, be it as direct colleagues or as subordinates, seems to be a reason for the interviewees to enjoy going to work every day.

This goes alongside with "support from leadership", which referred in particular to superiors who would side with the civilian experts in times of crisis or conflict in the workplace. In this context, it was also mentioned that some interviewees felt that it was good for them to have managers who would give them "challenging and enjoyable tasks" and the "freedom to implement own ideas". Although only mentioned twice, the factor "quick promotions & responsible position" was encouraging to the interviewees because they knew that their superiors had confidence in them. The interviewees received responsible tasks that they would not have done in a 'normal' work environment after a comparatively short time on the job.

Resilience Factor	Sub-factor	Mentions
Organizational, management factor	Support from organization	22
Personal factor	Self-care	20
Personal factor	Support group/peers/friends during the mission	13
Job-related factor	Good collaboration with colleagues and mutual support	10

Table 3: Specific resilience factors during all phases of an assignment

To sum up, the results show that it is important for the civilian experts to have a reliable social network in the mission and at home. The role of the seconding and international organizations as support factor should not be neglected either. Instead of adding to uncertainty, they can be the source for motivation by offering their secondees backup and support. In this context it should be kept in mind that working for one's values and seeing meaning in one's work as well as the feeling that the international organization also stands for this greater good can greatly enhance staff motivation. Ultimately, bringing together these points with individual self-care is at the center of the efforts to preserve the individual's ability to work.

4 Organizational Structures: UN/EU/OSCE

Some of the civilian experts felt better taken care of at their respective organizations than others in terms of organizational support. Interviews revealed a mixed picture with respect to staff care in general and stress management in particular. The civilian experts depicted supportive as well as hindering elements at their respective international organization. In the following, we describe the organizational structures related to staff care focusing on systems for stress management.

4.1 United Nations

4.1.1 Organizational Features

In the last two decades the UN has developed sizeable capabilities for stress management. Unsurprisingly, this fact can partly be explained by the long tradition of peace operations that the UN has had. Stress management, especially after critical incidents, became a focus of attention in the 1990s, possibly influenced by new mandates of peace operations in reaction to difficult mission settings i.e. in the Balkans or in Somalia. It gained even more momentum after the Canal Hotel Bombing in Baghdad in August 2003, which resulted in a large number of casualties and fatalities and required a professional approach to deal with critical incidents and security. Another important influencing factor for the further development of stress management capabilities was the Haiti earthquake in 2010, which also took its toll among UN staff.

The current structure's point of origin was the Ahtisaari Report, which depicted the flaws of the UN's security system to protect its staff and proposed numerous revisions.[21] In times of increasingly dangerous and intense peace operations, characterized by more exposure to the local surroundings, the UN system tries to offer different systems for staff care, counseling, and stress management. Basically there exists an intertwined threefold structure:

- The UN's Department of Management (DM) is responsible for staff matters. Its Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) supervises the Staff Counselor's Office (SCO) consisting of three counselors as part of its Medical Services Division. The former is "the primary source for providing mental health and

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[21] Cf. UN: Report of The Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq. 2003. Pp. III-IV.

psycho-social support to personnel at UN Headquarters locations for a variety of conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression, grief, burnout, substance abuse, relationship issues, and reaction to highly stressful events."[22] In addition to SCO, there exists the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team (EPST) at OHRM. After critical incidents the EPST's mandate is to "provide and coordinate essential support to staff survivors and the families of those who perish or are injured".[23]

- The Department of Field Support (DFS) is in turn responsible for staff counseling in field missions as part of the UN Peacekeeping Group together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In emergency situations the EPST has a counseling function to DFS.

- The Department of Safety and Security (DSS) is also responsible for field missions, however focusing on supporting the various UN agencies. DSS mostly emphasizes critical incident stress management (CISM). Therefore it has got numerous specialists in its Critical incident and Stress Management Unit (CISMU) that is the provider for "counselling services in all field missions and coordinates the UN response to critical incident stress in emergencies system wide".[24] Either CISMU has its own staff counselors in missions or it uses its "referral network of trained and certified mental health professionals" so it can cover 90 missions with its services. Currently, "Peer Support Volunteers"[25] are present in field missions and at various UN Headquarters locations together with "emergency Family Focal Points [and] Call Centre Volunteers"[26] to help out in emergency situations. Additionally, DSS' CISMU can come in to help or even take over if DFS' Field Personnel Division (FPD) is not able to handle the situation after a critical incident alone.

4.1.2 Mission-related Stress Management Capabilities

Pre-assignment | As described above, DFS is primarily responsible for counseling and stress management in DPKO-led field missions. Nevertheless, SCO manages pre-deployment clearance screening for all UN personnel sent from headquarters (HQ) to the field to assess potential mental health issues and avoid deploying someone who is not really fit to go. Staff members have to fill out a computer-based questionnaire on potential chronic mental issues or a history of trauma. Should this be the case a staff counselor further investigates this in a personal meeting. SCO also offers stress management trainings prior to assignment.

During the Assignment | The majority of DPKO-led missions aims at having their own medical personnel as well as their own staff counselor(s), who can be psychiatrists, psychologists, or even social workers to support personnel whenever needed. If a mission has no appropriate staff counseling capacity or needs further support,

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[22] UN: Resources Available for Staff Emergency Preparedness and Response. 2013. P. 3.

[23] http://un-epst.org/about-us, accessed on 08/12/2014.

[24] UN: Resources Available for Staff Emergency Preparedness and Response. 2013. P. 3.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

SCO offers programs on the ground so that the counselors can build staff resilience. This means that every staff member of SCO visits two to three DPKO-missions a year in order to provide training on stress management, resilience building, drug and alcohol abuse, mental first aid as well as modules on soft skills in crisis management, mindfulness, and communication skills.

Specific mission needs can also be addressed, i.e. seminars on coping strategies in times of change such as the downsizing of a mission, which has the potential to disturb the staff. Additionally, SCO develops all materials on psychoeducation according to a mission's needs.

Cumulative stress and trauma reactions are regarded as equally important since there is a belief that both areas cannot be separated. When it comes to critical incidents, trainings deal with how to help others and how to help oneself. Moreover, SCO tries to employ online tools to deliver psychological support where needed. Aside from that, there are some missions in countries where regular staff counseling is not possible due to security constraints. In these places the only way to deliver staff counseling is to hire local counselors and train and empower them, which is also done by SCO.

However, not all DPKO missions have staff counseling capabilities because in some cases the respective mission leadership might not believe in the value of such a system, for political, or even for financial reasons. In such missions, SCO comes in for a limited time whenever possible or in case of emergencies.

Post-assignment | One of the problems determined by SCO is that staff members of DPKO peacekeeping operations often tend to move from one mission to the next without taking a break. This does not leave any room for post-assignment counseling, which is also not mandatory. Therefore, SCO aims at developing an online tool so that staff members can interact with a SCO staff counselor at any point of their deployment. Ultimately, the aim of the SCO is to create higher sustainability for psychoeducational topics at the UN. This entails having a solid resilience program, rules and regulations on how long staff members should stay in missions, facilitating access to support programs, and the access to appropriate financial resources to keep any such program afloat.

4.2 European Union

4.2.1 Organizational Features

The EU recognizes that every day and traumatic stress in peace operations can negatively impact its seconded civilian personnel's performance. Although the different types of stress are acknowledged the focus lies on critical incident stress management. According to Civilian Planning and Conduct Capacity (CPCC) in the European External Action Service in Brussels, the "duty of care for mission personnel is an

interrelated concern and for seconded civilian personnel remains a Member States responsibility. Psychosocial support, stress management, and critical incident stress management (CISM) increasingly become a matter which has to be addressed as part of the duty of care."[27]

CPCC is currently underway to offer peer support training to mission staff as well as to identify the capabilities of the member states as well as certain EU missions when it comes to training before and staff counseling during assignment. According to our interview partners, decision-makers at the EU acknowledge the importance of stress management in staff care and are considering different options for the future. In their point of view, it is not just the EU, which should act but it is equally important to incorporate the Member States and other international organizations and coordinate existing capacities to come up with a viable system for psychological staff care.

4.2.2   Mission-related Stress Management Capabilities

Pre-assignment | Before deployment the EU does not offer any psychosocial training to their seconded international staff. It is regarded as a responsibility of the Member States. For contracted staff the trainings are provided on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, the European Commission is currently funding an initiative called Europe's New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management (ENTRi), which offers pre-deployment and Hostile Environment Awareness Trainings (HEAT) to mission personnel. Also, an EU initiative to collaborate with Member States to gain access to national trainings for its contracted personnel was proposed by the Planning and Methodology section of CPCC and CMPD (Crisis Management and Planning Directorate) and is currently under consideration by CIVCOM (Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management) but opposed by Member States.

During the Assignment | At present, the only EU mission with an active staff counselor is EULEX Kosovo. This system was inherited from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK). The staff counselor offers counseling, which takes up most of her time. Additionally, she takes care of critical incidents. She goes to the affected areas after an incident occured, debriefs affected staff and follows up and monitors them. Other tasks include training for managers on how to deal with organizational change (mainly downsizing), managerial counseling in case of problems in their teams, intercultural workshops, stress management seminars, sometimes team building exercises as well as sending out a monthly newsletter on mental health care issues.

Case Study: Afghanistan | After a critical incident in Afghanistan in January 2014, the EU in cooperation with UN DSS managed to provide emergency trauma care for the colleagues of the victims in the mission. Additionally, the EU decided to employ an own staff counselor in Afghanistan starting still in 2014. Prior to the incident, the mission's medical chief officer had already established contact to UN DSS to adopt

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[27]   EU - EEAS/CPCC: Questionnaire on Mental Health Care. 2014.

their peer support model. As a result their staff counselors had provided the peer training to EU personnel.

Accordingly, already 14 staff members were able to provide the necessary immediate support at the time of the incident. Although the first-aid psychological help requires a follow-up by professional support staff, this combination represents a valuable measure to avoid PTSD. This model is regarded as a good-practice example on how EU-UN cooperation in staff care could be implemented in other countries, where both organizations are present. First talks between CPCC and UN-DSS Under-Secretary-General have already been conducted to prepare an agreement in the future. Although the decision-making process is still on its way, several EU missions, i.e. in Libya and Somalia, already have the opportunity to resort to support from UN DSS staff counselors in case of traumatic or cumulative stress.

Aside from these efforts, CPCC tries to establish its own capacities to deal with critical incident stress management as well as to bolster peer support. A peer support training took place in Brussels in June 2014. 26 regular mission as well as HQ staff were trained on how to support their colleagues in case of critical incidents. The idea is to train as many mission staff members as possible so that all missions have several peer supporters. Depending on budgetary approval, the aim is to have four peer support trainings per year. While peer support should help in all missions, especially in the smaller ones, the larger-sized missions should also have a staff counselor in the future who would observe the staff and offer help early on. Clearly, critical incidents are the dominating topic when it comes to stress management. Yet, cumulative stress is more and more acknowledged as an important staff care topic, as well.

Post-assignment | The EU does not provide psychosocial support to its (former) seconded international staff after an assignment. However, there are discussions whether this approach should be adapted and it remains to be seen whether post-assignment debriefings could be an option for the EU. At present the head of mission has the responsibility during the assignment, afterwards staff care is clearly defined as a Member State task. They should look after their personnel and determine whether the returnees require any psychological support.

4.3 OSCE

4.3.1 Organizational Features

The OSCE has rules in place on how staff members should conduct their work and what processes are in place to support them in case of job-related problems. The relevant regulations are put down in the policy on a "Professional Working Environment". Psychological counseling is not yet part of the OSCE practices.

In the future the OSCE is considering to acquire an extensive program of psychological support through a 24 hour help line from their medical insurance provider Van

Breda. Aside from that, no strategy on stress management in field operations has been postulated so far. As with EU und UN, mechanisms are in place to allow staff members to regularly exit stressful environments, e.g. it is determined whether certain missions can be categorized as hardship, hazard or non-family duty stations and therefore more stressful. The organization tries to offer rest and recuperation leave and more frequent home leave for mission staff as well as extended paternity/maternity leave for non-family duty stations. In order to assess the situation on the ground the human resources department in Vienna is regularly in contact with management in the field. If serious stress situations arise different types of tailored solutions can be developed to alleviate the problem.

4.3.2   Mission-related Stress Management Capabilities

Pre-assignment | In principle, the OSCE does not have any pre-mission psychosocial training because of budgetary constraints (neither for contracted nor for seconded staff). Nevertheless, the OSCE welcomes programs from national authorities for their seconded staff. However, it does not monitor what is in place. Also due to budgetary constraints, no psychological evaluation of new staff members is conducted.

For a limited number of staff the OSCE offers the opportunity to attend field security trainings (i.e. a German-funded HEAT training in November 2014), which in part encompass psychosocial training. For new arrivals in a mission the Security Management Office and security focal points provide additional support. Previously, the general orientation program used to include a very basic module on stress management. Due to time constraints, this has been left out in the current version.

During the Assignment | According to our interview partners the OSCE recognizes the unique stresses of working in the field. The organization aims at improving support mechanisms working with current budget lines. As already indicated above, the OSCE does not have any staff counselors, doctors, or policies for stress management in place at this point in time.

Case Study: Ukraine | In situations where employees are in distress the OSCE employs a reactive, approach based on common sense in order to provide some kind of assistance. During the ongoing Ukraine crisis several OSCE monitors were abducted. The organization came up with rather extensive plans on how to support the monitors after their release. This tailor-made approach consisted of trauma counseling for the victims, which was purchased from the insurance provider Van Breda. Right after their release, the former hostages were flown to Vienna. Medical and psychological professionals were on board the aircraft to provide immediate support. Additionally, the affected persons were offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary psychological debriefing outside Vienna. However, none of the victims made use of this option. Instead they continued their journey directly to their respective home countries. The majority of affected people decided to re-join the mission in order to fulfil their contract. There was no psychological checkup before the return, but the OSCE tries to monitor their behavior on the ground.

Post-assignment | The OSCE does not provide services after an assignment/the end of a contract. Debriefing interviews are only carried out with senior staff such as Heads of Mission and Deputy Heads of Mission. All staff leaving the organization completely is asked to participate in an exit interview.

The OSCE acknowledges the importance of psychological staff care, especially when it comes to critical incident stress. However, there are no SOPs in place to deal either with critical incidents or with cumulative stress. To our knowledge, only one OSCE mission has had a staff counselor for a limited time in the past. Currently there is none. All of this is quite remarkable, considering the intensity of ongoing OSCE missions such as the one in Ukraine.

5 Findings and Recommendations

This chapter brings together the civilian experts' and the organizational perspectives and highlights current deficiencies in organizational stress management. We conclude that these gaps offer a lot of potential for seconding agencies to boost the stress resilience of their civilian experts, and we name a number of key options for action for a comprehensive duty of care concept.

Stress and Resilience – the Civilian Experts' Perspective

Our interviews clearly show that civilian experts in peace operations are under pressure and face numerous stress factors that they have to deal and cope with while they are on assignment but also in its preparatory phase and afterwards. Throughout all phases of deployment "organizational, management factors" have a substantial impact on stress levels together with "job-related factors". Civilian experts specifically struggle with "management issues" that are related to bureaucracy and decision-making processes as well as "HR issues". Furthermore, "tense relationships within the team" and times of "heavy workload or inactivity" represent major areas of concern and potentially lead to stress. Often the abovementioned factors play out together and can partially be related to the unresolved question of liabilities concerning seconded civilian experts. This, in turn, has the potential to be further aggravated by uncertain job perspectives and lacking social security.

Despite various types of stress, the interviewees told us why they would stay on the job and what kind of supporting factors, personal as well as organizational, potentially help them and boost their resilience. As shown above, the three supporting factors stated most are "support from organization", "self-care", and "support group/peers/friends during the mission", hinting at three main pillars to keep a person in good spirit. All three coming together would describe an individual that feels backed by its organizations, has the knowledge and skills to cope with stress, and a personal network of confidants.

Stress Management - the Organizational Perspective

Individual civilian experts can do a lot to successfully deal with stress they are faced with. Nevertheless, organizational backing also plays a big role not just to avoid but also to actively counter negative impacts of stress. What is done to alleviate cumulative stress from an organizational perspective?

First of all, the peculiarities of the secondment system impact the handling of the topic stress management as part of organizational duty of care. To a certain extent the civilian experts are caught between two stools, namely the seconding state/organization and the international organization. The corresponding responsibilities related to duty of care are not sorted out unequivocally among all actors including the civilian experts themselves. In the end, all of these stress-related aspects boil down to the question of burden sharing between seconding agency, international organization, and the individual. Which side is responsible for what part of stress management at what point of time?

When it comes to critical incidents, UN, EU, and OSCE have recently proven that they are trying to provide affected staff with appropriate emergency health and trauma care. However, the situation seems to be less clear when it comes to cumulative stress, which is a constant companion in peace operations. Concerning the development, implementation, and continuous further development of a policy on stress management all three organizations offer insights into different developmental stages of stress management in staff care. The UN has the longest history in peacekeeping operations, and has developed policies that include a system of staff counselors for psychological support in all parts of the organization including peacekeeping missions. The EU has started a process of developing policies for stress management and limited staff counseling capability. However, emphasis is put on the ongoing development of a peer support scheme. In general, the EU takes the view that its Member States need to be on board and do their part in stress management. The OSCE is in early stages of policy development. While the importance of stress management is acknowledged, the organization does neither have any written policies on stress management yet nor any staff counselors.

Aside from a lack of policy guidance, other gaps in stress management also become apparent. While the UN SCO (Staff Counselor's Office) performs limited psychological screening and assessing of potential staff before deployment, the EU and OSCE do not perform any such procedures and rely on the Member States or their respective agencies that provide seconded civilian experts. The situation in preparation and training prior to deployment is very similar. Neither the EU nor the OSCE offer any training but instead rely on the Member States' efforts. In the case of the UN, introductory trainings are offered, which also encompass a component on stress management. Once a mission or the individual job contract is drawing to a close none of the organizations offers any kind of counseling or support. Additionally, based on their sole focus on the mission phase none of the three international organizations offer any structured support to seconded personnel afterwards.

Closing the Gaps – an Enhanced Role for Seconding Agencies?

In comparison to ANTARES Foundation's guidelines on organizational stress management shortcomings in the international organizations' stress management schemes become apparent during all deployment phases (cf. Chapter 1.2). With respect to the

peculiarities of secondment, the organizations do not feel fully responsible for the deployed civilian experts when it comes to pre-deployment training or post-assignment support and leave these tasks to their Member States.

The seconding states and their agencies can alleviate the abovementioned deficiencies by thoroughly screening their candidates prior to deployment and provide them with appropriate training and equipment. Although the international organizations are primarily responsible for their personnel during assignment, seconding agencies can support the secondees by staying in touch, keeping them informed about political developments related to their particular mission, and even offer long-distance staff counseling, especially on cumulative stressors, if there is none on the ground. Finally, the seconding agencies can help out their seconded personnel by working with them on some kind of "exit strategy" in the late stages of deployment to mentally prepare them for their return and help them find new employment opportunities. This process should be intensified once a person returns from their assignment. In addition to that counseling should be offered for individuals that require psychological support.

In the case of seconded civilian experts from Germany there exist further "home-made" stress factors on matters related to the ambiguous liabilities connected to the secondees' status: taxes, social security, and health insurance, especially in case of incidents. Resolving these open questions has the potential to boost the morale of the civilian experts' by offering them more clarity and institutional backing. Other organizational issues related to secondments, problems with bureaucracy or the volatility of particular missions, might not be fully resolvable. Nevertheless, these topics deserve some attention since they frequently represent serious stress factors. Ultimately, the identified organizational shortcomings offer an opportunity for ZIF to fill some of the gaps and live up to its own commitment to duty of care for its seconded civilian experts by reducing the depicted stress factors that relate to organizational and job matters. Further dedication to improving the organizational support even has the potential to boost stress resilience of ZIF's civilian experts.

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