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# CHALLENGES TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA*

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* The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or
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## INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has undertaken responsibility for maintaining world peace and security. Drafters of the UN Charter envisioned an organisation engaged in the entire spectrum of conflict management and resolution, from preventive measures, to ad hoc responses to crisis, to the long-term stabilisation of conflict areas. The UN's responses to conflict are often grouped into the three stages of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. Peacemaking involves diplomatic efforts to manage or resolve the conflict1 and peace-building strives to stabilise post-conflict situations by creating or strengthening national institutions.2 Peacekeeping operations, however, have occupied a somewhat ambiguous place between the diplomats and the democracy.

The UN defines peacekeeping as "an operation involving military personnel, but without enforcement powers, established by the United Nations to help maintain or restore international peace and security in areas of conflict."3 Peacekeepers have become an indispensable tool in UN peace achievement efforts. Whether monitoring cease-fire agreements, separating the parties to a conflict, or, more recently, monitoring elections, UN peacekeeping forces have served an important role from the very beginning.

With the end of the Cold War came two important challenges. Armed conflicts more often emerged at the intra-state level. The level and scope of involvement had to change accordingly. The changing nature of conflicts following the end of the Cold War made it imperative for the UN to launch a new era of humanitarian interventions, some of which came into conflict with the concept of sovereignty. But, the UN over-extended its resources and lost much of its political backing. Peacekeeping forces were plagued with conceptual and structural problems. Two solutions followed: reform and regionalisation. For reform to be successful, it needs to help the UN to adapt to the changing nature of armed conflicts. But, the policy of regionalisation could prove dangerous for the UN's credibility and ultimate mission.

## THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The founders of the UN made no explicit provisions for peacekeeping in the 111-article-long

Charter. Chapter VI covered the voluntary settlement of disputes, and Chapter VII dealt with enforcement action. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld quipped that peacekeeping forces might be placed in their own chapter, numbered "six and a half." Lacking specific legal provisions, peacekeeping has emerged largely through precedent. The principles and customs of peacekeeping have been moulded by the various missions. Therefore, any discussion of UN peacekeeping must start by highlighting some of the major points in its evolution, from the Cold War to the present. Anthony McDermott states that there has never been a 'golden age' of peacekeeping operations.4 During the Cold War, peacekeeping had a relatively minor role that was largely confined to the Middle East and regional conflicts associated with de-colonisation. Peacekeeping forces thus helped to contain those crises in which neither superpower had a major interest, forestalling their involvement and subsequent escalation.

In 1956, the General Assembly created the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) for the Suez Crisis. The responsibility and authority for creating mandates has since fallen to the Security Council. UNEF I was charged with separating the sides, supervising the withdrawal of British, French and Israeli units, and patrolling the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Another important operation was the UN Operation in Congo from 1960 to 1964. Both of these experiences have shown that peacekeeping was not a simple procedure to activate and carry out.5

In 1973, another force was created to monitor the cease-fire and provide a buffer zone in the Arab-Israeli (Yom Kippur) War. Many of the principles that have since guided UN peacekeeping operations were crafted during this mission. According to the UN Under-secretary General for Political Affairs, Sir Brian Urquarth, certain political requirements became necessary to justify deployment: the consent of the parties involved to the mandate, the continued support of the Security Council, the use of force only in self-defence, the willingness of individual member states to supply personnel, and, of course, the member states and Security Council's willingness to fund the operation.6
In March 1964, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was introduced to provide a buffer zone between the Greek and Turkish populations on the island. Other forces in the Middle East during that period included a mission to supervise the disengagement of Syrian and Israeli forces on the Golan Heights, a force that in 1978 was charged with monitoring the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon. The common characteristic of these operations is their longevity. Their presence in relatively populated areas for more than a decade made peacekeeping forces a local party directly involved in politics on the ground. In addition, these forces became a long-term contributor to the civilian economy and provider of such services as medical treatment, housing, distribution of food and services, and family contacts.7

So far, we have discussed the first generation of peacekeeping operations. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the 13 pre-1988 Cold War peacekeeping operations as "largely military in composition and their tasks were to monitor cease-fires, control buffer zones, investigate alleged arms flows, prevent a resumption of hostilities and so on." In other words, they were to maintain calm on the front lines and give time for the peacemakers to negotiate a settlement of the dispute that had led to the conflict in the first place.8 Many of those political negotiations have failed, but, nonetheless, the UN peacekeeping forces prevented the expansion of many conflicts. An important characteristic of the first generation, or classic peacekeeping operations, is that they involved the post-truce interposition of a peacekeeping force with the consent of the parties to the conflict.

After 1988, however, UN peacekeeping went through something of a transition. With glasnost and

perestroika came an unprecedented co-operation among the five permanent members of the Security Council. The subsiding of Cold War tensions lessened East-West rivalry and there was an unprecedented era of expansion and optimism, not only in terms of the number of missions undertaken, but also in the scope of activity.9 More peacekeeping operations have been established since 1989 than in the previous 45 years of the UN's history. In 1988, the UN operated just five peacekeeping missions, but at its peak in 1993, it had 18. More peacekeeping personnel were deployed abroad than at any other time in history. In 1989, the UN had only 9,950 troops in the field. By 1993, it had a record 80,000. At the end of July, approximately 65,000 personnel were deployed in 16 UN peacekeeping operations.10

Peacekeeping operations during this era are often described as second-generation peacekeeping. Many of the operations lacked the explicit consent of classical operations and many operations had a new level of involvement. In second-generation operations, such as the UN Transition Assistance Group in Namibia in 1989-90, the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador in 1991-95 and the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992-93, there was consent of the parties involved. But, the peace agreements were complex and multidimensional. These operations were deployed as part of negotiated political solutions. Peacekeepers were also given new tasks such as electoral assistance, human rights monitoring, resettlement of refugees, police training, protection of humanitarian relief efforts, and disarmament and demobilisation of armed forces. An increasing regard for humanitarian intervention further widened the scope of peacekeeping mandates.

Between 1988 and 1991, the forces met successes in Africa and Central America, encouraging "the view that further development of the principles and practices would allow the UN to serve as an effective instrument to reduce violent conflict within the international system."11 In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to UN peacekeepers for their "decisive contribution toward the initiation of actual peace negotiations."

## THE NEW GENERATION OF PEACEKEEPING

In the wake of such optimism, came a new wave of efforts. Along with the new tasks of early 1990s came third-generation missions that were largely enforcement operations under Chapter VII of the Charter. They primarily involved internal conflicts and they often lacked the consent of the parties, as in Somalia and Bosnia.

The operations of the early 1990s were overly ambitious, given the considerable financial and political constraints placed on the UN by member states. To a large degree, the UN overextended its management capabilities, its resources and its political backing. These new endeavours were mostly incorporated into existing administrative and management structures, often lacking success. In fact, the problems of third generation operations in Somalia and Bosnia, and the "disastrous" mission in Rwanda "prompted a period of retrenchment."12 The Security Council-particularly the United States-was reluctant to authorise, implement or finance new peacekeeping operations. Rather than setting up more missions, the UN turned to improving its infrastructure and its operational efficiency. The total deployment of UN military and civilian personnel fell from its 1993 peak of more than 80,000 to approximately 14,000 in 1998.13 Along with this retrenchment also came a general consensus that much needed to be done to approach conflict management more inclusively with other fields. Many saw a need to better co-ordinate humanitarian concerns, human rights, social development and traditional military approaches.

Given the financial, logistical and political constraints, the UN also turned to a policy of delegation-some would say devolution. While affirming its three basic principles-consent, impartiality, and use of force only for self-defence-the UN delegated the enforcement of mandates to coalitions of willing member states and regional organisations more equipped to deal with the actual activities.14 This new approach continues to be followed and was affirmed in the 16 July 1997 Programme for Reform announced by the current Secretary General, Kofi Annan.15

## CHALLENGES TO PEACEKEEPING

Some of the challenges to effective peacekeeping are considered largely conceptual. In the past, peacekeepers were merely expected to separate hostile forces and observe cease-fires or truces. For the operation to be successful, it was essential that the parties to the conflict offered their collaboration and support. However, in recent conflicts, involving ethnic-based disputes, internal political struggle or the collapse of state institutions, the UN has been acting without the clear consent of the parties to the conflict. The result is that the environment for peacekeeping is no longer benign.16 Peacekeepers increasingly work in a climate of continuing armed conflict, sometimes in places where there are poorly defined borders or cease-fire lines and no guarantees of respect for their safety or role. Petru Dimitriu argues that this new and complex environment, together with the ambitious objectives of the United Nations and ever-growing pressure on scarce resources, has made it more imperative than ever to think clearly about when and how the UN should become involved in peacekeeping operations.17

Mats Berdal argues that "the fundamental distinction between enforcement and peacekeeping should be maintained … combining peacekeeping with enforcement action in one operation, as is effectively the case with the United Nations's Operation in Somalia, carries with it considerable military and political risks."18 Indeed, the cases of Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia and Somalia bring new challenges to the task of peacekeeping. Elevating peacekeeping to peace enforcement raises several issues. Chief among them is whether the UN is endowed with adequate resources to undertake certain enforcement mandates. Another issue is whether the UN can develop a competent structure to undertake enforcement, including cases where the military risks are very high. A further problem is legitimacy, and whether the impartiality that is the key to UN peacekeeping operations can be maintained.

The world community is unwilling to provide the UN with resources to undertake enforcement tasks. Without the political support of the five permanent members of the security council and, in particular, the logistical, financial and political support of the United States, no operation has ever been completed successfully.19 Passing resolutions under UN Chapter VII without providing the organisations with adequate resources for the mandate drains the process of credibility. A force equipped for peace enforcement would not enjoy the same acceptance as a friendly and impartial force. A peace enforcement force must be prepared to operate in a hostile atmosphere. So, one of the basic principles of peacekeeping-the use of force in self-defence-has to be considered. Mandates should suit the situation. For example, in July 1995, Serb forces overrun the UN-declared 'safe area' of Srebrenica and thousands of Muslim civilians were slaughtered in full view of the lightly armed UNPROFOR contingent whose mandate did not extend to the use of force to protect civilians. The force's mandate should have been better suited the situation in which they were placed.

Peacekeeping and peace enforcement are visible tools, well suited for particular conflicts, but they should not overlap in one poorly defined mission. The mandate needs to be clear, whether it is

peacekeeping or enforcement. Thus, a mission's success will be judged by its original intent. In fact, many peace enforcement missions have been publicly judged as failures, largely because they were judged through peacekeeping criteria.

Met with increasing criticism-not only from the United States, but also from the rest of the world-and the changing nature of operational environment, the UN has begun to address shortcomings in its efficiency and operational capacity. In July 1997, Kofi Annan proposed reform measures to confront the challenges of the coming decades. Emphasising that reform is an evolving process, Annan initiated many structural reforms. For instance, he set up a senior management group to eliminate overlap and better co-ordinate the various UN branches. He has also tried to create mechanisms to more closely monitor staff performance. As of yet, there have been few changes to the budgetary process. The UN has largely argued that reform would be easier if the United States were to pay its delinquent dues. The United States has retorted that it wants to see the reforms first.

In terms of peace operations, the organisation hopes to streamline its often slow and cumbersome responses to emerging crises. In many cases, precious opportunities have been lost by the lapse of time between the decision of the Security Council to mandate an operation and the moment when the peacekeeping forces arrive in the area.20 Earlier deployment of peacekeeping forces might prove to be more efficient in stabilising a critical situation before it erupts into widespread violence.21

Other structural limitations have hampered the effectiveness of certain missions. A lack of pre-deployment planning, mobility limitations, restrictions on the use of force, the sparse availability of military intelligence from member states, and, of course, a lack of funding, have all bridled the capability of forces to carry out their mandates. Several corrective measures have been suggested: improve communication between operations in the field and the New York headquarters, establish a central planning agency at the Secretariat, assign support regiments for UN duty, pre-stock general supplies at regional depots, arrange faster airlifts, improve early-warning capabilities and secure better military intelligence from member states.22

The UN planning task requires not only co-ordination within a department but also cohesion with various departments, offices, divisions and units involved in all aspects of UN peacekeeping. Appropriate co-ordination is essential between the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Administration and Management, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The reforms introduced in March 1992 do not seem to have resolved this essential structural problem of peacekeeping operations.

At the heart of UN peacekeeping reform, though, lies the Security Council. Griffin argues "the single greatest stumbling block in efforts to improve responses by the UN to crisis situations is the impasse over the reform of composition and procedures of the Security Council." But, this issue has proved to be the "thorniest item on the current agenda".23 Many have suggested that the Security Council should be more geographically representative. Some have suggested that the Council be enlarged and that the veto power of the permanent members be somehow amended. Japan, for instance, now contributes nearly 13 per cent of the general budget, but has little say in security issues. Unless reforms to the decision-making process of the Council are realised, the Council's legitimacy as a global decision making body will be hampered. Much of the strength of the UN is its universality, but a peacekeeping process comprising that universality could jeopardise not only the individual mission, but also the legitimacy of the UN in general. For example, the UN's involvement in the Gulf Crisis was widely considered to have boosted the organisation's power and profile. However, the

US's disproportional say in the decision-making procedures and the lack of influence of such countries as Japan and Germany (both of whom contributed vast amounts to the operation), led many to question the process. The very reason the US went to the UN was to gain legitimacy, but such a use of the Security Council erodes the legitimacy of the entire process. Other member states in the UN had little or no say in operational decisions either. It would seem that a further regionalisation of UN peacekeeping operations would exacerbate this problem. In the near future, however, any change to the composition and power of the permanent five Security Council members-the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain-does not seem likely to change.

Another constraint to operations has been the issue of sovereignty. Globalisation and the rise of intra-state wars have diminished the power of states as players in conflicts, and the UN needs to adapt to this changing political landscape. The UN Charter certainly upholds sovereignty in principle. But, the UN was set up, not to protect governments and states, but to 'save next generations from the horrors of war.' Under chapter VII, "Threats to peace, breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression" could merit intervention.

A convergence of political will against Saddam Hussein in 1991 produced Security Council Resolution 687 which envisaged comprehensive and somewhat intrusive interference in Iraqi sovereignty: regulating weapon types, designating borders, creating an observer force, enforcing reparations and controlling oil exports. Resolution 688 offered specific UN protection to the Kurdish minority in Iraq, indicating that the flow of refugees might constitute a threat to international peace. In the words of Christopher Greenwood, "It is no longer tenable to assert that whenever a government massacres its own people or a state collapses into anarchy, international law forbids military intervention altogether."24 Similarly, Kosovo Resolution 1160 passed in 1998 elevated the Province's status to "a substantially greater degree of autonomy and meaningful self-administration." Then, Resolution 1199 asked the Yugoslav government to withdraw its security forces from a part of its national territory. Clearly, there is a growing consensus that human rights abuses merit interventions into conflicts previously closed behind the doors of sovereignty.25

As mentioned earlier, there has been an increasing willingness to delegate missions to international or regional organisations with the funding and political will to carry them out. Though this often overcomes financial and political constraints, this solution could prove counterproductive. In his 16 July 1997 Programme for Reform, the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, recommended that regional organisations and coalitions take a more active role in peacekeeping:

The UN Charter does make mention of co-operation with regional organisations. But, this regionalisation seems to have arisen largely out of necessity and its ultimate effects could prove counterproductive. In the long term, it marginalises the UN, and, then, seen only as an outside player in world conflicts, the organisation might have an even harder time commanding funds and political support. Moreover, as Griffin argues, although this organisation represents an innovative solution to the crisis at the UN, regionalisation "entails a growing tolerance for external interventions, the motivations for which may be less altruistic and the conduct of which is not subject to rigorous multilateral supervision."26

PEACEKEEPERS OF THE FUTURE

The recent relationship between the United Nations and NATO's war in Kosovo has taught some important lessons: it is both an affirmation that the UN is still important and a wake-up call that

reform is urgently needed. The UN was largely excluded from the initial stages of war. This was mostly a tactical move on the part of the United States in anticipation of a Chinese or Russian veto in the Security Council. In the end, though, the UN was invoked largely for the sake of legitimacy. If the UN wants to be involved earlier in the process next time, it needs the budget and the infrastructure to command operations like that of Kosovo. The UN needs the capacity for both humanitarian and military operations more than ever since they are inseparably linked.

Security Council Resolution 1244 in June 1999, which provided measures for rebuilding Kosovo, proved that the UN is still relevant and needed. But, if the UN wants to use that relevance to live up to its Charter and "save next generations from the horrors of war," it needs to amend its peacekeeping agenda. It needs the funding, the strength and the capacity to mount and support a new generation of peacekeeping operations. The nature of war has changed and peacekeeping must keep pace.

1 Article 33 describes the basic techniques of peacemaking as negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement and resorting to regional agencies and organisations.
2 Peace-building activities can include monitoring elections, promoting human rights, providing reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, and creating conditions for resumed development.
3 United Nations, The Blue Helmets, 1985, p. 3.
4 Anthony McDermott, 'The UN and the NGOs: Humanitarian Interventions in Future Conflicts', in Anthony McDermott (ed.), Humanitarian Force, PRIO Report, 4/97, p. 75.
5 McDermott, pp. 75-76.
6 Brian Urquhart, 'The UN and International Security after the Cold War', in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury (eds.), United Nations, Divided World: the UN's Roles in International Relations, Oxford: Clarendon Press, revised edition, 1993, pp. 81-103.
7 McDermott, p. 77.
8 Karen A. Mingst and Margaret P. Karns (eds.), The United Nations in the Post-Cold War Era, Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1995, p. 80.
9 Beginning with the deployment of the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia between April 1989 and March 1990, there has been an enormous increase in the number of states involved in peacekeeping. In 1988, before UNTAG, only 26 countries were involved. By November 1994, there were 76.
10 United Nations, 'Report to the Secretary General on the Work of the Organisation', UN Doc.A/50/1, 22 August 1995, p. 81; and 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace'.
11 Mats R. Berdal, 'Whither UN Peacekeeping', Adelphi Papers 281, London: October 1993, p. 3.
12 Michele Griffin, 'Retrenchment, Reform and Regionalisation: Trends in UN Peace Support Operations', International Peacekeeping 6, No. 1 (spring 1999), pp. 2-3.
13 Griffin, p. 3.
14 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace, Position Paper of the Secretary General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations', UN Doc., A/50/60-S/1995/1, 3 January 1995, paras. 33, 80, 85-87.
15 He stated, "The United Nations does not have, at this point in history, the institutional capacity to conduct military enforcement measures under Chapter VII. Under present conditions, ad hoc member states' coalitions of the willing offer the most effective deterrent to aggression or to the escalation or spread of an ongoing conflict. As in the past, a mandate from the Security Council authorising such a course of action is essential if the enforcement operation is to have broad international support and legitimacy". 'Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform:

Secretary-General's Report', UN Doc., A/51/950, 14 July 1997, para. 107.
16 Dimitriu, pp. 224-5.
17 Dimitriu, p. 225.
18 Berdal, 'Whither UN Peacekeeping', p. 6.
19 The US Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25) of 3 May 1994 outlined new, very restrictive guidelines for US support and participation in UN operations. This has contributed significantly to the diminished credibility of the UN, especially in Rwanda.
20 Usually, it takes six weeks from the idea for a peace operation to the actual Security Council vote. After the adoption of a Security Council decision on a peacekeeping operation, the United Nations has to request member states make the necessary troops available. Subsequently, national governments and, in many countries, parliaments, have to decide on these requests and to approve troop contributions.
21 Dimitriu, p. 228.
22 Chapter VIII of the UN Charter established a constitutional link between the UN and other organisations. In fact, Article 52 encourages regional organisations to act in the spirit of the UN and "make every effort to achieve peaceful settlement of local disputes … before referring them to the Security Council."
23 Griffin, p. 13.
24 Christopher Greenwood, 'Is There a Right of Humanitarian Intervention?', The World Today 49, No. 2 (February 1993), p. 40.
25 The consequence of this trend, are, as of yet, unclear. The concept is still vague. Some states fear the consequences of this growing concept being carried to extremes.
26 Griffin, p. 1.