

PEACE OPERATIONS AS AN INTEGRATED PART OF THE UN STRATEGY FOR A MORE SECURE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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1. The Evolving Context of the Strategy for the Promotion of Peace, Stability, and Well-being

If one goes back to the original intentions of the founders of the United Nations and to the purview of the Charter, it is clear that the strategic aims assigned to the organization involved a broad mandate to promote peace, stability and well-being. These concepts were closely interrelated at the time and their respective weight was balanced. This initial conception was truly visionary and allowed for a wide range of potential actions to be undertaken by the organization in pursuit of these ambitious goals. Unfortunately it had no time to materialize along these lines.

The reality of post-Second World War diplomacy was dominated by the rise in Superpowers' rivalry, military confrontation, and the total subservience of international relations to ideological considerations. The logic of the Cold War, with its trail of proxy wars, altered the original spirit of the Charter and restricted the activities of the United Nations to a narrow interpretation of this document. The Organization was driven to focus exclusively on the "Peace and Security" components of its mandate. More than that, for many years, "peace" was interpreted only in a negative sense—as the absence of war—while "security" referred to military balance and political alliances.

It is in this context that new tools of peace promotion appeared at the United Nations, and peace-keeping operations (PKOs), in the traditional acceptance of this term, were created. However, few realize that the term “peace-keeping operation” which has become so closely associated with the United Nations over time, is nowhere to be found in the Charter. It is a concept which lies somewhere between the provisions of Chapter VI (on the peaceful settlement of disputes) and Chapter VII (on peace enforcement) of the Charter, and this explains why peace-keeping operations are sometimes referred to as measures in accordance with Chapter 6.5 of the Charter. The legal basis for such operations is derived from a specific mandate issued by the Security Council for each separate mission.

With the end of the Cold War, a new approach was necessary. Devising new parameters was now possible due to the spirit of cooperation, which prevailed among the permanent members of the Security Council. A new vision of security began to emerge, as early as November 1989, as a result of a joint Soviet–American initiative. At that time, a new item was introduced on the agenda of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, in the form of a draft resolution calling upon all States to “enhance international peace, security and international cooperation in all its aspects in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.” Presented on 3 November 1989 for urgent consideration, resolution A/RES/44/21 was adopted in a plenary meeting on 15 November 1989. This landmark resolution opened the way to an integrated approach to peace promotion. Specifically, it mentioned the role of the United Nations “in resolving international problems of a political, economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character” and referred to the need to “find *multifaceted* approaches to implement and strengthen the principles and system of international peace, security and international cooperation laid down in the Charter.”

Based on this new all-encompassing method, the United Nations was able to embark upon a more assertive and ambitious approach to peace promotion. This period was characterized by greater activism and success in traditional peace operations. Brian Urquhart, in an essay on the UN after the Cold War, recalls the initial successes of this new strategy:

The Iran–Iraq war came to an end in August 1988 on the basis of a Security Council Resolution; Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988–89 under a plan negotiated by the Secretary-General; Namibian independence was achieved in March 1990 on the basis of a 1978 UN resolution; Cuban forces began staged withdrawal from Angola in 1989; and UN peace-keeping and good offices were employed with growing effect in Central America.

However, the end of the Cold War is only the visible part of an iceberg, and although we have laid it to rest we need to avoid engaging in a “cold peace” in which nations retreat into counterproductive, isolationist policies. In less than a decade, the world has undergone such significant changes as a result of globalization and technological innovations that one can genuinely talk about a change in our civilizational paradigm. The United Nations, with its unique humanitarian perspective, has been called upon to play a significant role, mitigating the adverse effects of change; creating appropriate conditions for change to occur in a non-violent, evolutionary, rule-based fashion and

reconciling diversity of interests into a unity of purpose—towards the achievement of peace, stability, well-being, and sustainable development.

New threats to security are appearing, in the economic or environmental sphere for example, and they tend to be transnational in essence. The existence of global networks of “uncivil society,” including terrorists, drug and arms traffickers, money laundering criminals and other such unruly outlaws poses new challenges to security. In view of all of this, the United Nations conception of security has enlarged from what was once virtually only geostrategic in nature to an all-encompassing, more humane definition. In the recent words of the UN Secretary-General:

The United Nations is the only organization that works to safeguard all aspects of human security in this ever-changing world of ours to promote, as the Charter puts it so well, better standards of life in larger freedom. We are there to deal with challenges ranging from climate changes to AIDS, from the health and happiness of women and children in the developing world to the fight against drug smuggling and organized crime. We are there to deal with practical issues ranging from civil aviation to the protection of intellectual property. We are there, in short, to build for humankind that decent way of life which is the foundation of freedom and the prerequisite for peace.

In an attempt to further identify some of the ingredients of the new definition of security, I should like to focus on the human component, which is definitely at the core of the modern concept of security. Human security means that people should be free from the fear of war, and this of course cannot be limited to international conflicts. It must apply as well to civil wars and this explains why the traditional doctrine of non interference in the internal matters of a sovereign State is being increasingly challenged by those who claim that the international community has “a duty” to intervene for humanitarian purposes. Human security however, is a concept that extends far beyond warfare situations. It also means freeing people from the fear of arbitrary abuses from totalitarian regimes, a concept, which carries an implicit mandate for the international community to promote democratization and human rights. Human security means freeing people from the fear of hunger, poverty, and illness. Accordingly, one of the newest ideas to be explored by the Human Rights machinery of the United Nations is the “right to food.” This broad definition of human security involves as well the need to revise and further develop the concrete implications of the right to development.

Focusing the action of the international community around the needs of “the peoples” of the United Nations is thus the prime rationale for the evolution of the concept of security.

Two other characteristics enter the modern definition of security. First, the recognition that security is common. In other words, one cannot achieve ones own security at the expense of others. Secondly, the recognition that security is comprehensive. Political, military, economic, energy, and environmental factors are closely interconnected and must be considered together in order for security to be at all meaningful.

In terms of the means of implementation, the United Nations must pursue its efforts at integrating its peace operations in the broader context of its policies aimed at promoting

human rights, development and democratization. It is only through such an integrated approach that the United Nations will contribute to promote a more secure twenty-first century.

2. Peace Operations

Peace operations currently deployed around the world can be classified in four broad categories: global peace operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations; transcontinental operations undertaken by such organizations as NATO; traditional, sub-regional operations; and national peace operations.

In the United Nations context, after an initial spurt of successful operations following the end of the Cold War, the setbacks experienced in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and the Great Lakes region somewhat sobered the general optimism and led to a thorough reassessment of scope. Strategic choices have been made and the new United Nations policy with respect to peace-keeping operations is to concentrate on preventive action and to explore innovative methods of post-conflict peace building.

2.1 Preventive Diplomacy

Preventive diplomacy is a complex task, which involves the whole array of political, diplomatic, legal, and military tools available to the United Nations. The political/diplomatic tools that can be resorted to in this context overlap those enumerated in article 33 of the Charter on the settlement of disputes. This article specifically refers to: “Negotiations, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means.” All of the above legitimately apply in the context of preventive diplomacy.

The legal tools available to the United Nations should also not be underestimated for preventive purposes. The decisions or advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) can prevent disputes from erupting into full-fledged conflicts.

In recent years, the concept of preventive diplomacy has been broadened to include the use of military tools in peace promotion. It is no longer considered anachronistic for the United Nations to deploy troops for preventive purposes. To this day, UNPREDEP, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, is still the only instance of preventive deployment, but it has proved effective and it has created a precedent. The mission of UNPREDEP was to prevent a spillover of the Yugoslav conflict into the entire Balkan region. Beyond its basic mandate to monitor the border area, UNPREDEP successfully served as a deterrent to external aggression.

The UNPREDEP example demonstrates that with a small, almost symbolic deployment of United Nations peace-keepers, major conflicts can be avoided. In early 1996, at its peak, UNPREDEP involved a 1050-strong military contingent, 35 military observers, 26 civilian police, 73 international civilian staff, and 127 locally recruited staff. Roughly 1300 people were able to make a difference and avoid bloodshed, with no casualties involved. One can only hope that more use will be made of the preventive deployment option in the future. The only problem associated with this tool is a political one:

convincing politicians to get involved at an early, pre-conflict stage. The long-run cost-effectiveness of this type of operation should be highlighted.

Recognizing the potential of preventive diplomacy, the Security Council, as early as January 1992, adopted a declaration (S/23500) mandating the Secretary-General to prioritize this activity. Accordingly, the Department of Political Affairs was created to observe political developments worldwide, provide early-warning of impending conflicts and analyze possibilities for preventive action.

In the present context of the reform proposals introduced by the Secretary-General on 15 July 1997, the priority granted to preventive action is further reaffirmed and the objective of upgrading the global watch system of the Organization is specifically mentioned. Early-warning systems are essential to support the efforts of the Security Council and of the Secretary-General to deter conflict.

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