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Maintaining International Peace and Security: The United Nations as Forum and Focal Point

BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI*

I. INTRODUCTION

Each international war in modern history has been followed by a "turning-point," at which nations convened to shape a new world order. After the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna met in 1815. After World War I, there was Versailles. After World War II, the United Nations ("U.N.") was created at San Francisco.

When the Cold War ended, a system of international relations also departed. Thereafter, when troubles arose, individual states turned to the U.N. for guidance, as it was a foundation already in place.

At this point in time, we have reached another such turning-point in world history. Yet, no new international gathering has come in the wake of the Cold War; no Vienna, no Versailles, and no new San Francisco is to be expected. The U.N. as it exists may serve as the only forum.

These diplomatic rooms in which we are meeting honor Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Adams, great names among America's Founders. The constitution they produced remains alive. It is a solid document, able to stand up to the storms of history. But it is also a flexible document, able to respond to the winds of change.

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The Charter of the United Nations is also a document of genius. It can hold fast to principle, yet it can also adapt to new conditions. The spirit of the Charter was kept alive for decades under very difficult circumstances. Hope has been crucial. Achievement is now required. There are strengths we can build upon, but there are also changes we must contemplate.

Democracy is not a word that appears in the Charter. Yet, the opening words, "We the Peoples of the United Nations," build democratization into the World Organization. Whether or not its Member States are democracies themselves, they are joined in a structure of equal representation. Democratization is the thread which runs through all the work of the Organization. Within nations, as much as within the family of nations, democracy should provide the structure for international peace and security.

Human rights, equal rights, and government under law are important attributes of democracy. With participation, social and economic development becomes meaningful; with freedom of speech and of thought, civil institutions become durable. Individual involvement in the political process enhances the accountability and responsiveness of governments. In turn, governments that are responsive and accountable are likely to be stable and to promote peace.

Promotion of peace and security, economic and social development, and democracy are one and the same. The ending of the Cold War has ended the compartmentalization of issues. It has revealed the indivisibility of the tasks of the U.N.

Today, I intend to focus on peace-keeping. In doing so, I must stress that this is only one aspect of the work of the U.N. Seventy to eighty percent of U.N. activities are focused elsewhere. But today, U.N. peace-keeping operations are of urgent interest and concern. The Organization established to promote collective security has now become the world's most active peace-keeper. The newspapers are filled with unexpected, dangerous, and difficult situations for U.N. forces. Threatening conflicts are underway in many parts of the globe.

When the U.N. was created, the Charter gave responsibility for international peace and security to the Security Council. But the Cold War impaired the Council's function. Individual states everywhere learned to calculate their interests and seek security in the context of the bipolar contest.

Faced with this reality, the U.N. invented a role for itself: peace-keeping. This had not been contemplated by the Charter drafted in 1945. Peace-keeping had to be “invented” by the U.N.—and the genius of the Charter could accommodate it. Over the years, it came to have a fairly specific meaning.

Traditional U.N. peace-keeping required the consent of all parties to a conflict. Troops provided by Member States of the U.N. served under the command of the Secretary-General. The forces were lightly armed. Their mission was to interpose themselves between parties who had decided to halt their fighting, agreeing on the need for an international presence to keep the peace. Peace-keepers could use their weapons only in self-defense. Confrontation was to be avoided if at all possible. It was not part of the peace-keepers’ mandate to become involved in the internal affairs of the individual states or entities involved.

Currently, what the world has known as “peace-keeping” has changed. The reality on the ground is evolving out of the conceptual structures of the past. We are witnessing the emergence of the second generation of peace-keeping, and far more is required than interposition with the agreement of parties to a cease-fire.

In discussing this new generation of peace-keeping, I would like to discuss three changes: the changing *facts* which peace-keeping now confronts; the changing *structure* of our response; and the changes that are needed in our *concepts*.

II. DISCUSSION

A. *The Changing Facts*

There is an immense quantitative change with the facts surrounding U.N. peace-keeping. The U.N. has launched more peace-keeping operations in the last four years than it did in the first forty-three. Currently, the U.N. is involved in thirteen peace-keeping operations on five continents. Over 53,000 authorized military personnel are serving at this moment under U.N. command, along with over 10,000 international and local civil personnel. Because of this increase in involvement, the operations approved at present will have cost over three billion dollars in 1992, more than four times the previous highest annual figure.

There is also a quantitative change in the number of phases that an operation may have to go through. For years, the troops of the United Nations Force in Cyprus (“UNFICYP”) have patrolled

the line which separates the antagonistic forces without fundamental change. A new operation today, however, is likely to go through a number of different phases in order to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground. Between erecting barriers against violence and building bridges of rehabilitation lies a great variety of changing situations to be faced.

New military facts must also be faced. U.N. operations today may require disarming or seizing weapons from factional fighters, with or without an agreement. The arms must be kept in custody and possibly destroyed. Before, during, and after conflict, the serious problem of land mines must be dealt with. Additionally, humanitarian aid now may require military protection. The old assumption that those bringing relief will be allowed to do their good work unharmed can no longer be taken for granted.

Non-military matters have also become of great importance in peace-keeping. It is almost always the modern case that operations undertaken by the U.N. must include civilian police, electoral personnel, human rights experts, information specialists, and a significant number of political advisory staff.

We also face a new fact of international life: the failed state. This is a concept which the Charter did not foresee; indeed, the failed state is a product of the end of the Cold War. Regimes are proving unable to cope with the withdrawal of superpower support, weak institutions, collapsing economies, natural disasters, and ethnic strife.

Rescuing failed states may become an inherent part of second-generation peace-keeping. It will require long, complex, and costly missions which, by their very nature, involve the U.N. in the internal affairs of the country concerned. Complicated military tasks must be complemented by measures to strengthen institutions, encourage political participation, protect human rights, and promote economic and social development.

B. The Changing Structure

These changes have created a new set of circumstances that call for a rapid response and comprehensive effort. This means that we must reform the *structure* of our approach.

A good example of this is the problem of standby troops. If the availability of troops is to be guaranteed in the necessary time-frame, Member States must either assign them permanently to the

U.N. or formally agree with the U.N. to make troops available within an agreed response time. The first option is not yet available; the second option may be possible if reforms are undertaken.

It is difficult to forecast the troop requirements for future missions or for sudden expansions of existing missions. On the other hand, there is a wealth of data available from past missions, and many common features emerge. It is possible to describe a range of scenarios of varying complexity, each generating the need for a force structure of a particular size and capability. These force structures can be broken down into standard "building blocks" of operational capability, such as infantry batallion, medical company, transport company, observer team, etc. Each new mission requirement could be elaborated in terms of these standard building blocks.

The overall objective would be for Member States to formally commit themselves to provide one or more of such blocks. This would simplify the Member State's national planning; it could budget for such a commitment in its defense estimates, or it could keep a nominated group on standby. From the military point of view, such standby units could be briefed and trained in the U.N. peace-keeping operations as part of their normal annual training cycle; thus, they would be better prepared than units made available on an *ad hoc* basis.

The need to be comprehensive will require wider cooperation with regional organizations. In a number of recent cases, the U.N. has combined its efforts with those of regional institutions or organizations and has encouraged a rich variety of complementary efforts with regional organizations. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, the U.N. works with the European Community; in Somalia, with the Organization for African Unity; in Haiti, with the Organization of American States. There are many such examples. No two regions or situations are the same. The design of cooperative work must adapt to the facts of each case with flexibility and creativity.

My aim is to see that cooperation between the world Organization and regional organizations evolves into an increasingly effective division of labor. While the U.N. retains its primacy in the maintenance of international peace and security, its burden can be substantially lightened and its mission reinforced by the active involvement of appropriate regional arrangements and agencies.

C. *The Changing Concepts*

Finally, let me address the *concepts* that must be understood and accepted if U.N. peace-keeping is to be transformed to deal successfully with changing realities.

First, the concept of *preventive diplomacy* is of vast importance. This requires personal contacts, good offices, fact-finding missions, and early warning systems. None of the concepts I have put forward in the past year has met with such a warm response as preventive diplomacy. No other endeavor for peace repays so well our time, effort, and investment.

But today, the concept of preventive diplomacy needs to be expanded. It may require, for example, observers as a means of dealing with violence. In recent months, U.N. observers have worked in close cooperation with the National Peace Secretariat in South Africa to reduce tensions, contain demonstrations, and stop clashes from getting out of control.

Further, within this expanding concept of preventive diplomacy has come the Security Council's decision in December 1992 authorizing me to establish a presence of the U.N. Protective Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.¹ This act of preventive deployment was taken to preempt a wider Balkan war. It is the first time that the U.N. has taken a step of this kind, and it is an example of the growing range of actions that preventive diplomacy will need to encompass in the future.

Second is the concept of *expanded peace-keeping*. The protection of humanitarian relief supplies is a new necessity for peace-keeping in a growing number of conflicts around the world. This need was most dramatically evident in recent months in Somalia. In the former Yugoslavia, U.N. forces were authorized to secure the Sarajevo airport and related lines of communication in order that vital humanitarian assistance be able to flow to the besieged population.²

Expanded peace-keeping also may require sanctions when cease-fire agreements are violated. In such cases, the U.N. may need to authorize military measures to enforce economic sanctions. The "no-fly zone" is one example. Another Resolution is in effect in Cambodia, where the Security Council has imposed petroleum

1. S.C. Res. 795, U.N. Doc. S/RES/795 (1992).

2. S.C. Res. 764, U.N. Doc. S/RES/764 (1992).

sanctions against “any Cambodian party not complying with [the Paris] Agreements” for cease-fire, disarmament, and national reconciliation.³

Additionally, when the established rules of engagement for peace-keeping operations are no longer sufficient, U.N. forces may need authorization to react to force and, in some cases, use force to forestall an escalation in violence.

As circumstances warrant, U.N. forces must be thought of differently and be expected to have a different profile. They must be able to deploy rapidly; they must have more firepower; and they must be able to draw upon a far wider range of personnel. Also, they must have adequate financial support.

The third new concept is *post-conflict peace-building*. This involves sustained efforts to identify and support structures to consolidate peace and to create greater trust and well-being among peoples. Without such efforts, no peace agreement is likely to endure for long. Such measures require commercial, cultural, and educational projects that build bridges between the parties to a conflict. The goal is to forestall a reemergence of cultural and national tensions that could spark renewed hostilities.

The concept of peace-building is the counterpart of preventive diplomacy, which seeks to avoid the breakdown of peaceful conditions. After peace-making, peace-enforcement, and peace-keeping achieve results, post-conflict peace-building must prevent a recurrence of hostilities.

In this second generation of peace-keeping, every operation will be different. Somalia is a good example. First, the Security Council, pursuant to Resolution 794 of December 3, 1992, authorized me and certain Member States to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in the country. This was to allow the United Nations Operations in Somalia (“UNOSOM”) to fulfill its mandate. We accomplished this by creating the Unified Command (“UNITAF”), with the United States as the major participant. UNITAF has, to some extent, restored order and provided for the distribution of food to the Somali people.

In my report to the Security Council of March 3, 1993, I expressed the view that the second stage of the operation must now involve a new mandate for United Nations Operations in Somalia

3. S.C. Res. 792, U.N. Doc. S/RES/792 (1992).

("UNOSOM II"). UNOSOM II would encompass not only continued disarmament and pacification, but also national reconciliation, dialogue, and the strengthening of political institutions.

My special representative, Admiral Jonathan Howe, has begun work in Somalia and at the Conference on National Reconciliation held in Addis Ababa. All these efforts are directed towards one central goal: to help the people of Somalia establish order and new institutions for their own governance.

III. CONCLUSION

Somalia shows second-generation peace-keeping in action. It also underscores the challenge ahead. We must find new ways—intellectually, morally, and materially—to speak to the deeper foundations of international peace and security. These are rooted in the development of each of its aspects: economic, social, political, and environmental. Today, I have focused on peace-keeping, but the greater context should be understood. Unless we advance the development of the planet economically, socially, environmentally, and democratically, we will not break the cycle of conflict we see everywhere today.

There are three basic challenges to the international community: (1) to understand the nature of the new, post-Cold War role of the U.N.; (2) to make the commitment of human and financial resources necessary for the U.N. to do its job; and (3) to give clear and comprehensive mandates to the Organization when new challenges arise.

This is a time to be bold. But it is not a time to be utopian. The margin by which the U.N. can affect critical situations is narrow. At the same time, we do not have the luxury of lowering our sights. We live in a globalized world. There are needs which only the U.N. can meet.

The U.N. is the forum for the world system that we must build. The Charter recognized the issues and set out a system to address them. Our task, therefore, is to use our Charter to answer the issues of our time. Within the context of a great tradition, and with a willingness for change, we can build a better and safer world.