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OF PEACEKEEPING: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT
PROPOSALS**

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IAI9326

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

STRENGTHENING THE UN CAPABILITIES IN THE FIELD OF PEACEKEEPING: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROPOSALS

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The end of the Cold War has created the conditions for a relaunching of the role of the United Nations. In the last few years, the Security Council has indeed shown a much stronger decision-making capacity. This has led to a remarkable expansion of the activities of the UN.

However, the gap between the increasingly complex and multi-dimensional tasks the UN is facing and the still scarce resources it musters has been increasing. The debate on the most appropriate measures to adopt to fill this gap has hence intensified.

There is a clear need for a reform of the UN system which enables it to meet the growing request for the regulation and the collective management of international relations. At the centre of the debate are the problems connected with the new UN responsibilities in the field of maintenance of peace and international security. This was the subject of the first Summit meeting of the Security Council held on 31 January 1992 (see Daley 1992 and Pickering 1992) and the report «An Agenda for Peace» presented by the UN Secretary-General upon request of the SC.

Peacekeeping is by far the area of UN action which has had the most impressive expansion, including an increasingly broad range of activities: preventive deployment, observer missions, control over the respect of sanctions, no-fly zones, protection of humanitarian relief operations, assistance to civil authority. Furthermore, the recent practice of peacekeeping has marked a shift from many traditional principles - consent of the parties, use of force only in self-defense, exclusion of permanent members of the SC from the participation, strict impartiality towards the conflicting parties. Indeed, some important current operations, such as those in Somalia and Bosnia, are taking place in a non-permissive environment, where a legitimate and effective authority does not exist, and hence on the basis of mandates which authorize some enforcement actions. In addition, there is a substantial participation in those operations of some SC permanent members. The term «second-generation operations» has been coined to designate these new forms of peacekeeping (Mackinlay and Chopra, 1992 and 1993).

Beyond this qualitative change, the UN peacekeeping has undergone a quantitative growth which is not less striking. While less than 10,000 troops were deployed in 1987, their number will be some 100,000 by the end of 1993. However, there has not been, in the meantime, a substantial rise in the resource base for funding peacekeeping, nor the necessary strengthening and improvement of the management structure and of the procedures for the operations, apart from the adoption of some minor reform initiatives. As a result, the system seems to be rapidly approaching a breaking point.

What follows is an illustration of some major proposals aimed at strengthening UN peacekeeping.

1. Strengthening UN headquarters and operations management capacity

An increasingly large number of UN staff has been assigned to tasks connected with peacekeeping. However, the problem of the shortage of personnel for the management of

operations has continued to worsen. In the meantime, the growing number of administrative entities entrusted for one or another aspect of operations has led to an excessive diffusion of responsibilities.

The Secretary-General has recently adopted some measures to remedy this situation. He has, inter alia, invited member states to select personnel for possible deployment in a peacekeeping operation and accepted that they make such personnel available on loan. In addition, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has been strengthened. It now incorporates the Field Operations Division (FOD) which was previously part of the Department of Administration and Management (DAM). Furthermore, a military planning cell has been established within the DPKO.

There is also the need for more effective and timely communication links between officers in New York and field headquarters. A situation room, consisting of military officers, has recently been established with the purpose of ensuring continuous communications with operations in Bosnia and Somalia. There are plans to transform it in a permanent center covering all missions.

An effort has also been made to clarify the roles respectively of the DPKO and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which, beyond being responsible for early warning and preventive diplomacy, has the task of promoting the negotiating process and other aspects of peacemaking also after an operation has been launched.

This process of rationalization of the management procedures and structure of peacekeeping operations needs to make new progress. A vital goal is a further strengthening of the DPKO in both quantitative terms - increase in the available resources - and qualitative ones - a higher degree of specialization of its staff and a more effective organization of its structure. At the same time, other measures should be adopted for a better coordination between the military and civilian aspects of the mission and for a strengthened link between New York headquarters and the field.

2. Establishment of an effective system for information collection and analysis

In many cases, the UN cannot rely on adequate sources of information for the conduct of peacekeeping operations. This often limits seriously its ability to achieve the goals defined in the operations' mandates. It would be essential for the UN to be able to rely on an aerial and ground-based reconnaissance and surveillance capability. As it clearly cannot afford to have its own independent instruments for the most sophisticated intelligence activities, the current efforts concentrate mainly on securing arrangements whereby member states undertake to make available to the UN their information collection and analysis capacities. There are however two major obstacles. First, a strong reluctance remains to share sensitive information. Second, the member states without advanced intelligence capabilities, in turn, fear that the countries which possess them can pass on information to the UN in a selective and biased way, according to their national interests.

3. Activation of the Military Staff Committee

In his report «An Agenda for peace», the Secretary-General also proposed the activation of the Military Staff Committee (Boutros Ghali 1992, p. 43), which, pursuant to article 47 of the Charter, includes the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council or their representatives. The revitalization of the MSC was also advocated by France's President Mitterrand at the SC summit meeting in January 1992. Furthermore, the Soviet government under

Gorbachev and subsequently the Russian government have on several occasions called for providing the MSC with an operational capacity. NATO, in turn, has repeatedly declared its readiness to make available its capabilities, facilities and expertise to enable a revived MSC to provide military advice and technical supervision to the SC. NATO planners have already begun to discuss such a plan with the UN officials.

It is unclear, however, exactly what tasks would be assigned to the MSC. Article 47.3 of the Charter states that the MSC «shall be responsible under the Security Council for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council». The assignment of this function to the MSC would make sense mainly in case of the establishment of permanent or stand-by forces (see below). At any rate, there are reasonable doubts concerning the suitability of a body with such a heterogeneous composition for military planning and command. The experience of recent UN operations have indeed highlighted the need for a greater unity of command and a clearer definition of the objectives, which the MSC is very unlikely to provide. Many key-countries - in particular, the US - are also extremely reluctant to place their forces under an international command.

As an alternative, the responsibility of a resuscitated MSC could be of a non-operational nature. It could be limited to the task - foreseen by Article 47.1 - of giving advice and assistance to the Security Council. However, some less ambitious operational functions - short of strategic direction - can be envisaged. Mackinlay and Chopra, for example, have proposed the establishment of a training center and the organization of military and «large-scale UN military and humanitarian relief exercises» under the direction of the MSC with the aim of conferring «a sense of operational credibility» to the UN. (Mackinlay and Chopra 1992, p. 125).

There is another major difficulty associated with the idea of activating the MSC. Some countries - especially the Third World ones - understandably fear that this could lead to a further increase in the power of the permanent members of the Security Council. This would be unacceptable to those who are already questioning the role and composition of the UN supreme organ.

4. Creation of a standing force

The proponents of a UN permanent force see it as a way to solve some key problems connected with peacekeeping activities. First, and most important, it would ensure a rapid-reaction capability which is increasingly perceived as essential for effective UN intervention in some emergencies. Indeed, Boutros Ghali has repeatedly stressed the need for a substantial reduction in the time-lag which currently passes between a SC decision to authorize a new operation and its actual deployment (Boutros Ghali 1993, p.69). Second, a standing force would, by definition, be an integrated one with a more or less high level of specialization for peacekeeping operations. This would represent a clear advantage in comparison with the units currently serving under the UN flag. Third, the crucial problem of ensuring a unity of command would become much more manageable.

However, the idea of a UN standing army is unrealistic for the foreseeable future, as it lacks the political support of the five SC permanent members and is opposed by most of the other countries, especially the developing ones. Furthermore, on a technical plane, the problems of integrating multinational units into a single force would be difficult to overcome because of the major differences in equipment, training and command procedures among the countries which would be most likely to participate in such a force (this would not necessarily be limited to Western countries). The creation and maintenance of a standing force would also entail extremely high costs and a further expansion of the UN bureaucracy. This would be in sharp contrast with

the current efforts at a rationalization of the UN system and a more efficient use of available resources. This point has been emphasized by the Secretary-General: «A standing UN force would be too expensive, wasteful and inappropriate for the organization while it is in the process of a vital restructuring exercise aimed at minimising inefficiency and duplication» (Boutros Ghali 1993, p.69). It must be added that the decision-making process for the deployment of a standing force, given the very high political meaning that its use would have, is likely to be rather complex and time-consuming. Therefore, the main advantage of a standing force - the rapid-reaction capability it could give to the UN - would be lost (See also Gerlach 1993).

5. Earmarking of stand-by capacities

While ruling out the feasibility and appropriateness of a standing military force for the UN, the Secretary-General has strongly advocated the idea that member states earmark standby capacities of various types - troops, equipment, logistics, communications services etc. - for UN rapid-reaction missions. With such an instrument at its disposal, the UN would, according to the Secretary-General, be more likely to be able to deter a potential aggressor. It must be recalled that at the January 1992 Security Council meeting President Mitterrand made known France's readiness to make available to the SG a 1,000-man force for missions «at any time, on 48-hour-short notice».

In «An Agenda for Peace» report, the SG recommended the application of article 43 of the UN Charter, which calls for special agreements - to be reached through negotiations -, whereby member states undertake to make available to the Security Council «armed forces, assistance and facilities» for conducting enforcement actions. He has, however, recognized that the member states are unlikely, for some time to come, to be willing to make available forces for the missions foreseen under article 42, i.e. those aimed at responding to outright aggression, actual or imminent. He has therefore advanced a less ambitious, but more realistic, proposal: that member states make available on call what he has called «peace-enforcement units». These forces would be used to restore and maintain cease-fires (They should therefore be termed, more appropriately, «cease-fire enforcement units», as stressed by Marrack Goulding: see Goulding 1993, p. 91). Indeed, as most recent experience has shown, the UN often has to deal with situations in which cease-fire agreements reached under its aegis are repeatedly violated. As their task would be much more demanding than traditional peacekeeping - which is supposedly to take place in a permissive (non-hostile) environment - , the «peace-enforcement units» would, according to the SG, have to be more heavily armed than peacekeeping ones (Boutros Ghali, 1992, pp. 43-44. See also Weiss 1993, p. 64; Mackinlay, 1993).

Stand-by capacities could also be provided to the UN by regional organizations. The Director of the WEU Institute for Security Studies, John Roper, has hinted at the possibility of a formal agreement between WEU or NATO and the UN on the availability of forces on the basis of Article 43.3 (Roper 1993, p. 10). It must be noted however that the WEU still lacks an integrated military structure (although the experience and expertise developed within its planning cell could be usefully made available to the UN). As for NATO, an agreement on the availability of standby capacities would imply a significant departure from the current alliance policy to make its assets available to the UN and the CSCE on a case-by-case basis only.

There obviously remains the distinct possibility that the member states keep some military capacities on stand-by for more traditional UN peacekeeping operations (Boutros Ghali 1992, p. 44).

Ongoing efforts aimed at promoting stand-by agreements between the UN and member states concerning personnel, units and equipment, are particularly important. A special planning

team of military officers - the Stand-By Forces Planning Group - was established with the task of defining standard components - divided among several 'building blocks' - which are required for each type of mission. The objective of this initiative is the signing of agreements whereby the member states declare to be ready in principle to provide on request a «known number of troops, in a known formation, to a known equipment scaling and with a known timescale» (cit. in Berdal 1993, p. 62).

6. Creation of depots for pre-positional equipment and stocks

The availability of pre-positional equipment and stocks in some key areas of the world would significantly shorten the time needed for the deployment of the UN troops and reduce the transportation costs.

To ensure a rapid start-up of operations the UN Secretary-General has also proposed that member states make some of their bases available to the United Nations on call.

7. Strengthening of cooperation with regional organizations

The UN Secretary-General has placed a great emphasis on the need for an implementation of Chapter VIII of the Charter concerning the cooperation between the UN and regional organizations (see Boutros Ghali 1992, pp. 60-65 and Boutros Ghali 1992a).

However, one can nourish legitimate doubts on the actual ability of the regional organizations to contribute significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in the field of peacekeeping. Most of them lack the needed capabilities, resources, and expertise. This is particularly true for regional organizations outside Europe. Indeed, only NATO has an effective military structure. Furthermore, their decision-making procedures are, in most cases, lengthy and inefficient (more so than those of the UN).

A second major shortcoming from which most regional organizations suffer is insufficient prestige and legitimacy. In particular, they can be perceived as not impartial enough. For this reason, their intervention in a crisis or conflict is often opposed by the parties involved. With its legitimating action, the US could alleviate this problem, but only to a limited extent. An emblematic case is the refusal in the early Fall 1991 by both Serbs and Croats of the deployment of an EC-sponsored interposition force in Croatia, though they later accepted the deployment of a UN contingent with the same function.

8. Establishment of training programs for peacekeeping personnel

In his last report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has stressed the importance of the objective «to create an international pool of peacekeeping personnel with comparable skills, knowledge, discipline and code of conduct, able to work together effectively at short notice» (Boutros Ghali 1993a, p. 105). Indeed, the shortage of specialised personnel has become one of the major problems in the field of peacekeeping. There is the need to improve the level of training, in particular, of units provided by countries which have little experience in peacekeeping. Several training programs are currently being prepared in the UN, including the drafting of manuals and the construction of special facilities.

9. Reform of peacekeeping financing mechanisms

There is a concrete risk that the very serious financial crisis which is afflicting the United Nations can paralyze its ability to carry out and support peacekeeping operations. These tend to absorb an increasingly large share of the scarce resources at the disposal of the world organization.

Expenditures on peacekeeping operations, which had already increased five-fold between 1988 and 1992, are expected to increase three-fold again in 1993, up to 4.2 billion dollars. The 1993 costs of the UNOSOM II mission alone are projected to exceed 1.5 billion dollars (for the purposes of comparison, the 1992 UN regular assessed budget amounted to 1.14 billion dollars). This sky-rocketing rise in peacekeeping expenditure can clearly not be sustained in the short run unless effective measures are adopted to overcome the main stumbling blocks which have so far prevented the UN from relying on a larger resource base.

It must be stressed that the key condition for solving the UN financial crisis is that the member states pay their assessments in full and on time and that the amount of arrears be reduced or their growth be curtailed. If this objective is not achieved, any other measure or combination of measures are very unlikely to produce significant effects. Indeed, as has been underlined, «the UN is not so much under-budgeted as it is under-financed» (Schoettle 1993, p. 34). A substantial increase in the UN financial resources could also be realized by giving the world organization independent sources of financing (for instance, a levy on arms sales or on international air travel, just to cite one of the most often discussed proposals). This should be regarded as a long-term goal, however, given the governments' strong reluctance to grant the UN this additional power.

More specific proposals aimed at improving the financing system for UN peacekeeping have also been advanced. The following is a list of the most relevant ones.

a) The time is more than ripe for a revision of the 1973 formula for calculating the assessment scale for peacekeeping operations. This formula assigns an excessive burden to the five permanent members (about 22% above their regular assessment rate). President Clinton called for a reduction of the US quota from 30,4% to 25%. It would be even more reasonable to reduce Russia's assessment for peacekeeping as well as that of other East-European countries. In parallel, the quota of some countries included in 1973 in the «less developed» category should be increased. Several systems for a recalculation of the assessment rate have been suggested.

b) The budgetary process of peacekeeping operations is very complex and time-consuming. In particular, the budget for any operation has to be approved by the General Assembly, which often requires a lengthy negotiating process. This often provokes long delays in the actual deployment of the UN troops, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the missions. The Secretary-General has thus proposed that the General Assembly appropriate one-third of the cost of each new operation as soon as it is decided by the Security Council (Boutros Ghali 1992, p. 73). It must be noted, however, that many member states, concerned about the exceptionally high growth rate of the peacekeeping costs and the increasingly greater role of the Security Council, firmly intend to resist any move aimed at reducing the prerogatives of the General Assembly in budgetary matters.

c) A Peacekeeping Reserve Fund was established in 1992 as an additional form of UN financial reserves. With its authorized 150 million dollars, it can cover only a very small portion of projected 1993 peacekeeping costs. In a 1993 report on the UN financial system - the so-called Ogata-Volcker Report - an independent advisory group proposed to increase the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund to 400 million dollars (Independent Advisory Group on U.N. Financing, 1993).

d) To rationalize the financing system of peacekeeping it has been proposed that the assessments for individual operations be entered in a single budget to be financed once a year.

e) The UN personnel working on peacekeeping budgets has to be considerably increased to guarantee an effective financial management of the operations. Furthermore, emphasis has to be

placed on the need for a greater transparency of the peacekeeping budget. Enid Schoettle has suggested the creation of a new UN organ «comparable to the US General Accounting Office» (Schoettle 1993, p.42).

f) A proposal which has been gaining increasing support is that of shifting the costs of peacekeeping from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to the Ministries of Defence. The first objective of this proposal is to enable the governments to draw from the larger resource base the Ministries of Defense usually have to meet the rapidly increasing peacekeeping costs. The second is more political: to give a clear recognition of the relevance of peacekeeping for national security. However, this inclusion of the financial contribution for peacekeeping in military budgets is unlikely to be sanctioned as a general rule, given the differences among the budgetary procedures of the individual countries.

Another problematic aspect of the recent peacekeeping experience has to be stressed. The principle was established in 1972 that peacekeeping costs have to be paid through mandatory assessed contributions, according to the fundamental principle of collective financial responsibility. The financing of peacekeeping activities during the Cold War was actually based on this principle. More recently, parallel to the expansion of peacekeeping activities, the share of the costs paid through voluntary funding has been steadily rising. This has mainly been the result of a dramatic increase in expenses for activities - humanitarian and enforcement - which traditionally have been financed through voluntary contributions. The UN Secretary-General has repeatedly warned that this trend may jeopardize the principle that peacekeeping is a collective activity of the UN. Any reform project of the funding mechanisms for peacekeeping should thus try to reconcile the preservation of this principle with the indisputable need for substantial voluntary contributions.

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