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KEEPING PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

by

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THE ISSUE

On 21 September 1992, President George Bush directed emphasis on peacekeeping as a mission and training task for combat, engineer and logistic units. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney informed NATO in October that American units would now include a full range of peacekeeping operations in their mission requirements.

The effects of this presidential initiative on America's military professionals, and on their doctrines for use of military power, are profound. Despite President Bush's initiative, the many continuing U.S. foreign deployments have not been pure peacekeeping operations. While Americans have supported United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKOs), they have not participated directly. Peacekeeping is a distinct, legitimate military function that has not yet become an established part of America's military mission.

As they explore the implications of peacekeeping under the rubric of operations other than war, soldiers, diplomats, politicians and journalists are actually addressing operations that are fundamentally different from peacekeeping. Most recent operations have been much more warlike: "{ A }ny situation in which violence is being used to compel the submission of an opponent and to attain a specific political purpose is war and must be approached as such."¹

Specialized military operations, such as doctrinal UNPKOs (Suez, Cyprus, Sinai), Operation Sea Angel (Pakistan-Bangladesh, 1991) and Operation Provide Comfort (Kurdistan, 1991), are truly actions other than war.

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Against this background, this essay seeks to focus the American soldier's approach to peacekeeping within the framework of existing doctrine and practice, and to address emerging concepts for operations other than war. Unquestionably, the primary role of U.S. forces is to fight the nation's wars, and peacekeeping as such should remain a secondary mission.

PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE

Although universally associated with the United Nations, peacekeeping is neither mentioned nor described in the UN Charter.² Chapter VI provides for noncoercive conflict settlement, Chapter VII for coercive enforcement of the peace through direct intervention. Forceful military intervention under Chapter VII—the military usage which has come to be known as military peacemaking³—has occurred only when the Security Council judged a situation so serious that a large UN operation was essential. Examples are Korea, 1950; Congo, 1960; Cambodia, 1990; Saudi Arabia, 1991; Somalia, 1993. More common were peacekeeping operations involving more modest political-military affairs consistent with Chapter VI. These have been defined as

containment, moderation, and termination of hostilities between and within states, through the medium of peaceful third party intervention, organized and directed internationally, using multinational forces of soldiers, police, and civilians to restore and maintain peace.⁴

The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Suez spawned the prototype peacekeeping operation as the legitimate child of international politics and collective security. UNEF intervened in November 1956 after French-British-Israeli-Egyptian belligerents agreed that negotiation was the preferred option.⁵ First enunciated by Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold in 1958, the basic premises of peacekeeping, which characterized all 29 UN PKOs, emerged from UNEF as accepted peacekeeping doctrine.

Preconditions for Peacekeeping Operations

Several implicitly agreed conditions for legitimate introduction and operation of peacekeeping forces which evolved from the UNEF experience were:

- Approval. PKOs exist only on explicit approval, not merely consent, of disputants and host governments, and with consensus of permanent members of the Security Council as to composition, roles and missions of the intervention force.
- Cooperation. PKO forces do not act against the will of disputants or host states, but need active cooperation. PKOs are possible only when disputants support foreign intervention.
- Structure. The Security Council alone determines organization and command structure of the PKO force, with some consideration of host country desires. Permanent members of the Security Council do not provide contingents of peacekeeping forces. National command structures do not control PKOs, although national administrative and logistic support is normal.

- Voluntary participation. Member nations have no obligation to participate in, or support, UN PKOs. Forces, resources and funds are provided by separate national decisions.
- Noncoercive. All parties cease combat before deployment of a PKO force. The PKO mandate excludes forceful imposition of solutions. PKOs do not obligate parties to act other than voluntarily. Mediation without force is the limit of PKO authority.
- Self-defense. Although committed to missions that can involve casualties,⁶ PKO forces are not meant to fight, defeat an enemy, or seize and occupy positions. “Peacekeepers were deployed to keep the peace, not to make war; their major weapon was moral authority, not military strength.”⁷ When belligerents violate the peace or attack the PKO force, the UN has no mandate to act beyond self-defense, and the PKO force has usually withdrawn.

Essential Features of Peacekeeping

Essential to any UN intervention are both the reality and the public perception of strict impartiality and multilateral decisionmaking. While impartiality may not always be efficient or just, any legitimacy of UN peacekeeping rests on truly neutral protection of political sovereignty and economic autonomy, not just human rights.⁸ Impartiality does not allow casting one side of a conflict as the “good guys” and the other, the “bad guys.” The UN remains bound by its Charter, no matter whom the press or “outraged public opinion” may brand as the villain (i.e., *Khmeres Rouges* in Cambodia, Serbs in Bosnia, General Mohammed Farah Aidid in Somalia).

As the essential foundation for legitimacy, impartiality virtually precludes all but purely administrative or logistic involvement by any national command authority. All proper PKOs have been multinational, with national components operating as autonomous units under combined headquarters. Units of several nationalities routinely share areas of operations, functional responsibilities, logistic arrangements and chains of command.⁹

Peacekeeping Operations

The primary role of PKOs has been limited to a single narrow type of noncoercive intervention: separation of belligerents who consent to be separated. PKOs require decentralized initiative and command, and political reliance on judgments of junior peacekeepers — military and civilian. PKOs involve large areas, sporadic light contacts with belligerent (not enemy) forces, and reliance on deterrence (not combat) foreffect. Between countries, PKO forces deploy along borders, establishing demilitarized zones. In an internal war, they monitor ambiguous boundaries between areas of influence. The PKO force requires unrestricted freedom of movement within the operational zone for its visible, mobile forward presence, and responsive diplomatic-political links to belligerents and sponsors.¹⁰ PKOs do not need strategic mobility, but require protracted logistics, resupply and maintenance of equipment, and deliberate troop rotation, since duration can be indefinite.

In conjunction with peacekeeping duties, PKO forces have often performed related tasks (providing law and order, distributing relief aid, etc.). Operations are conducted primarily below battalion level, with higher levels focused on civil-military and international relations. Things that PKO soldiers actually do — administer buffer zones, inspect for compliance with cease-fire terms, establish safe havens, monitor troop and refugee movements — are not the sorts of things that combat soldiers normally do.

What Peacekeeping is NOT

In contrast to Chapter VII actions (coercive enforcement), PKOs are not intended to involve actual combat. They provide structure, confidence and controls for preventing combat. Well described as constabulary efforts, soldiers' duties focus on patrolling and observation. PKOs specifically exclude forcible entry or combined-arms operations opposed by enemy forces. Peacekeeping is not a method for imposing peace on belligerents, nor for protecting national or global interests. It is not intended for the use of military force to resist aggression, or impose the will of peacekeepers. PKOs do not have military objectives. As such a peacekeeping operation is not a special form of low intensity conflict or limited war. Rather it is an alternative to war.

Substantially different from the combat operations for which military forces are trained and equipped, peacekeeping represents the tasks that states are prepared to let the UN assume "where there is truly a peace to be kept and where the peacekeeping forces serve the function of assuring each party that the others are in compliance."¹¹ While much less than the Charter empowers the UN to do, peacekeeping doctrine reflects the reality of what the UN can do.

NEW APPROACHES TO PKO AND INTERVENTION

In practice, peacekeeping operations have evolved into a viable and useful military reality. Many nations are shifting military emphasis toward missions of peacekeeping and disaster relief — even crime control — within multilateral structures. Some have adopted PKOs as a primary mission and modified force structures and doctrine accordingly.¹² Canadian and Nordic military forces have developed standard PKO procedures, and integrated training and exercises into routine peacetime activities.

With Moscow's changing attitude toward the UN in the late 1980s, the "center of gravity of the peacekeeping discourse began to shift closer to enforcement actions and away from peacekeeping as practiced in the past."¹¹ On 17 June 1992, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali presented to the United Nations "An Agenda for Peace." The Secretary General included doctrinal peacekeeping "to preserve peace once it is achieved" among UN efforts to resolve conflict, recover from conflict, and address causes of conflict. "{B}eyond these measures, when established rules of engagement are no longer sufficient, United Nations forces may need authorization to use force."¹²

AMERICAN WAY OF WAR AND PEACEKEEPING

The American way of war, embedded in both the U.S. Constitution and American culture, has generated an American military philosophy that constrains any direct U.S. involvement in PKOs. While brief interventions may be presented euphemistically as force projections, the American way of war seems incompatible with peacekeeping doctrine, practice and experience.

The American preference for brief, overwhelming military operations that achieve clear, decisive victory has become a powerful cultural element of American politics.¹⁵ “{O}nce the nation has committed itself to war, self-restraint in the use of force goes against the historical grain.”¹⁶ Conduct of war and achieving victory become military tasks with popular support and congressional involvement to keep the war effort focused on quick victory.^{17, 18, 19}

Where political conditions preclude clear, quick victory as an achievable military goal, strong popular and congressional opposition focus on two broad political issues: legality of committing forces, and particular strategies and tactics to conduct operations. Domestic partisan politics become a forum for examining, criticizing and even reversing military decisions.

Americans quickly lose patience with the ambiguities and restraints of PKOs. They demand unequivocal criteria for determining when soldiers have accomplished their missions and can come home. The American people simply will not support a protracted, costly operation entailing large numbers of our ground forces to serve as referees in a region of the world not deemed to be tied to our nation's vital interests.²⁰

This American philosophy seems likely to continue into the 21st century, with continuing deference to public opinion. Americans will focus on short, overwhelming operations. Despite successes in the Gulf War and Panama, both multilateral and unilateral military interventions remain unpopular and politically risky. The “no more Vietnams, no more Koreas” attitude remains powerful.

A PROFESSIONAL AMERICAN APPROACH TO PEACEKEEPING

Four options for American operations other than war seem relevant: 1) unilateral action; 2) leading a situation-specific coalition; 3) participation in UN peace enforcement; and 4) participation in a doctrinally pure UN PKO. It seems clear that the first option — unilateral action — is, and must remain, a robust U.S. capability of the highest priority. Less clear are multinational interventions. The second and third options — involving multilateral operations — differ only in the American role (leadership or participation). Participation conjures images of what is called the peacekeeping trap, a loose grouping of countries within which the United States must “pursue common international interests rather than presumably narrow national ones.”²¹

The remaining option — participation in UN PKOs — is politically unattractive for American forces. Historical reasons for avoiding direct U.S. involvement remain valid. In peacekeeping operations, American soldiers face a doctrine incompatible with both U.S. military operational concepts and the American military philosophy. UN peacekeeping doctrine embodies the need of

PKO forces to deter reemergence of war between two other military opponents. Some other armies do it very well, and need only American logistic, intelligence and communications support to continue doing so.

As military professionals around the world develop innovative approaches to international security, the U.S. Army should keep doctrinal peacekeeping in perspective as, at best, a secondary mission that warrants available logistic, intelligence or communication support. Despite professional interest and media attention, PKOs should not be a primary mission of American soldiers.²² The United States should not allow its soldiers to stress peacekeeping at the expense of other primary national security missions.

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ENDNOTES

1. Col. James M. Dubik, "War In All Its Forms," *Armed Forces Journal International*, vol. 131, no. 9, April 1994, p. 35.
2. Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson first used the term "peacekeeping force" to describe the 10-nation UN military force created under the 1950 "Uniting for Peace Resolution" after the British-French-Israeli invasion of Suez in 1956. UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold is said to have referred to peacekeeping operations as "Chapter Six-and-a-Half," falling between peaceful conflict resolution under Chapter VI and enforcement measures of Chapter VII.
3. The international lexicon for "peaceful" military operations is neither definite nor agreed. American diplomacy, the press, and the Clinton administration seem to prefer the term "peace enforcement." The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff informally adopted this term in 1992. As used here it subsumes military peacemaking, coercive humanitarian intervention, forceful military intervention, actions under Chapter VII, and other *ad hoc* multinational interventions, but excludes peacekeeping.
4. I.J. Rikhye, M. Karbottle and B. Egge, *The Thin Blue Line: International Peacekeeping and Its Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 11.
5. After the November 1956 cease-fire in Suez, the UN Secretary General accepted responsibility for organizing the "task of clearing the Suez Canal ... to reestablish free and secure transit"; the U.S. Navy provided several mine-clearing vessels for the operation, but never became part of UNEF.
6. UN PKOs have incurred over 800 casualties since their beginnings in 1948 (*The Economist*, 12 January 1992, p. 12.)
7. Kofi A. Annan, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, "UN Peacekeeping Operations and Cooperation with NATO," *NATO Review*, vol. 41, no. 5, October 1993, pp. 3-7.

8. Peacekeepers "cannot take sides even between victims and aggressors. This presents a practical as well as a moral difficulty: by precluding support of local forces the requirement of neutrality increases the requirement for outside intervention." (Paul D. Wolfowitz, "Clinton's First Year," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 1, January/February 1994, pp. 38-39).
9. J.D. Murray, "Military Aspects of Peace-Keeping: Problems and Recommendations," in Henry Wiseman, *Peacekeeping: Appraisals and Proposals* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1983), esp. pp. 184-185.
10. Lt. Col. Karl W. Eikenberry, "The Challenges of Peacekeeping," *ARMY*, vol. 43, no. 9, September 1993, p. 18.
11. Wolfowitz, "Clinton's First Year," p. 38.
12. Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have legislation committing forces to support UN operations under specified conditions. Canada, Austria and the Netherlands have declared themselves "standby countries" without specific commitments. The United Kingdom and Russia have made formal offers of support for UN operations (Robert C.R. Seikmann, *National Contingents in United Nations Peace-Keeping Forces* {Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1991}, pp. 47-61).
13. Augustus R. Norton, and Thomas G. Weiss, "UN Peacekeepers," *Headline Series*, vol. 292, Spring 1990, p. 44.
14. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace: One Year Later," *Orbis*, vol. 37, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 323-324, p. 327.
15. Eikenberry, "The Challenges of Peacekeeping," p. 15.
16. Amos Jordan, William J. Taylor, Jr., and Lawrence J. Korb, *American National Security*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 260.
17. Robert Endicott Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), Chapter 2.
18. John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 8th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), pp. 4-11.
19. Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 63-64.
20. Eikenberry, "The Challenges of Peacekeeping," p. 16.
21. Wolfowitz, "Clinton's First Year," p. 36.
22. Eikenberry, "The Challenges of Peacekeeping," p. 17-18.

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