

ARMIES IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING

MATS BERDAL
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
LONDON

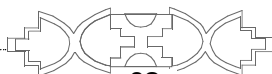
INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the challenges of contemporary peacekeeping operations, and considers the extent to which peacekeeping is likely to remain a 'growth industry'.¹ It is divided into three sections. Section one provides a brief overview of events since 1989. It argues that the widely-held view that the end of the Cold War would automatically translate into a more prominent role for the UN in the field of international security, ignored important elements of continuity in world politics. The second section examines the specific difficulties which the UN has encountered in conducting its operations. It assesses some of the reforms initiated since 1992 and suggests how member states and their armed forces may strengthen the UN's capacity to conduct multinational military operations. The third section highlights the issues discussed by focusing on the UN operation in Angola before multiparty elections in September 1992.

PEACEKEEPING AFTER THE COLD WAR

At the first Security Council Summit Meeting in January 1992, world leaders expressed unfeigned optimism about the future role of the United Nations in international relations. Its achievements in Namibia in supervising the transition from South African rule to independence and in assisting the peace process in Central America, were seen as predictions of a more constructive pattern of involvement in the resolution of regional conflict. Moreover, the willingness of the US to use the UN to legitimise actions against Iraq during the Gulf crisis, further raised expectations about the role of the organisation in the realm of international security. At the same time, Boris Yeltsin's presence at the meeting, after the abortive *coup* in the Soviet Union in August 1991, indicated to most observers that the paralysing influence of the Cold War would no longer impair the effectiveness of the UN Security Council as the organ with "*primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security*".

Underlying the optimism of early 1992 was the view that the "*established principles, procedures and practices of peace-keeping*"² would increasingly serve as an effective instrument to reduce the level of violent conflict internationally.³ Against this background the Security Council invited newly appointed Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to prepare an "*analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening and making more efficient within the framework and provisions of the Charter the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peacekeeping*".⁴ By the time the report was completed in June 1992, the Security Council had



authorised three new major 'peacekeeping' operations in Croatia, Cambodia and Somalia.

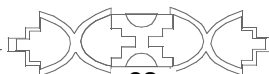
The initial euphoria about the potential role of the UN had dissipated by the summer of 1993. The continued brutality of ethnic warfare in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the complete failure of the first UN operation in Somalia, the catastrophic relapse of Angola into civil war, and the ongoing problems experienced by the second UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), had all undermined the spirit of internationalism surrounding the summit in 1992. Moreover, the slow pace of UN reform, financial instability and the apparent reversal of America's commitment to strengthen UN peacekeeping capabilities, added to the perception of an organisation in crisis.

This brief and incomplete survey of events since early 1992 suggests a more complex relationship between the end of the Cold War as a 'system' and the prospects for a revitalised UN role in the field of international security. Discussions of future UN peacekeeping activities should recognise that difficulties experienced by contemporary peacekeeping forces are not only the result of the organisation's own inability to adapt to changing circumstances. At a deeper level, events in 1993 reflect the nature of an international political system which, although no longer polarised by superpower rivalry, is still characterised by conflict of interest among states. Although the UN is more central to issues of international security than during the Cold War, states still function in terms of own interests. The management of power remains a central theme of international relations and, most importantly, there is no consensus among "*major powers about the basis for international security*".⁵

The failure to appreciate these realities provides an important background to some of the UN's present difficulties. In the case of both Angola and Cambodia it was widely felt that detaching protracted civil wars from broader East-West confrontations would achieve lasting political settlements. By the early 1990's, global rivalry was no longer a factor in either Cambodia or Angola, nor did its absence provide the necessary basis for a lasting settlement. It can be concluded, therefore, that making democratic multiparty elections within a finite time period the single focal point of comprehensive political settlements is not enough. In Angola and Cambodia insufficient attention was paid to other autonomous sources of conflict and to the consequent need for post-election strategies.

The persistence of national interests and autonomous sources of conflict does not, however, imply that nothing can or should be done to improve the effectiveness of the UN. Although the political will of member states is inextricably tied to perceptions of national interest, it is not immutable and the effectiveness of the UN is one of the factors that influences it. As recent operations have demonstrated, failure to adapt to changing circumstances, find remedies for malpractice and assume more complex roles, is increasingly affecting the attitudes of member states towards UN peacekeeping.

Consideration should be given to planning and management processes at UN headquarters in New York, occasionally referred to as the 'higher management' of peacekeeping, and to specific difficulties encountered by UN forces in the field.



MANAGEMENT OF UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

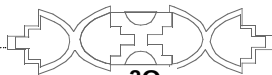
The UN system for planning and supporting field operations has remained largely unchanged since the end of the Cold War. For its effective functioning, the management of peacekeeping still relies to an unusual degree on improvisation, *ad hoc* arrangements and close working relationships among members of the Secretariat and between officers and civilian personnel in the field. When Boutros Boutros-Ghali assumed office in 1992 he promised to introduce reforms that would “*eliminate duplication, redundancy and excessive layering of offices and duties at the headquarters*”.⁶ Changes introduced since January 1992, however, have failed to address the central management problem with respect to peacekeeping: they have not reversed the growing decentralisation of peacekeeping functions within the Secretariat and the consequent diffusion of authority in the management of operations.

Management problems have not been addressed adequately by most recent efforts aimed at strengthening the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York. These efforts include a modest expansion of staffing levels, through the appointment of a military officer responsible for training and co-ordination, a civilian de-mining expert and a civilian police advisor, the creation of an embryonic Planning and Co-ordination Cell that will eventually be headed by a Deputy Military Advisor, and the establishment of a Situation Room in New York.

The Situation Room, which is currently manned by officers on short term secondment from member states, was set up in connection with the UNPROFOR and UNOSOM operations, but will be extended to provide general capability able to cover all missions. It does not, however, constitute a command centre in the strict military sense of the word. The need to strengthen UN capabilities in this area, however, has been amply demonstrated over the past year. In an ominous sign, however, the US Congress vetoed a modest Pentagon request for \$10 million to ‘beef up’ the Situation Room in September 1993.

Measures have also been taken to enhance the flow of information into the UN from member states through the installation of an intelligence processing system in the DPKO. The system, known as the Joint Deployable Intelligence Support System, was donated and installed by the United States to support UNOSOM II operations, but is also viewed as an initial step that will eventually enable the Secretariat to receive, process and disseminate information provided by member states to the organisation.

While these changes have undoubtedly improved the ability of the Secretariat to plan and co-ordinate operations more effectively, they are representative of a response to current operations in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, rather than a long term integrated plan. Changes have been incremental and fragmented, partly because of financial constraints, but also owing to fierce bureaucratic resistance to a re-examination of the role and location of the Field Operations Division (FOD), presently located in the Department of Administration and Management and responsible for co-ordinating logistics, personnel and financial support. Much greater attention must be given to the requirements of co-ordinating activities between departments, divisions and



offices within the UN Secretariat. On the one hand, this would involve the absorption of FOD functions into the DPKO. It is equally crucial, however, that those responsible for mediation, conflict resolution and negotiations - the Department of Political Affairs and the Executive Office and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General - co-ordinate actions and agree on responsibilities with 'implementing agencies' such as the Department of Peacekeeping, Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR and UNDP. Until the relationship between these branches of the organisation, as well as many regional organisations, is better defined, attempts at effective conflict prevention and resolution will be extremely difficult.

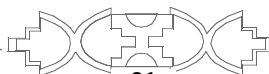
FIELD OPERATIONS: PEACEKEEPING AND INTRA-STATE WARS

The dramatic increase in the number of UN operations since 1988 has been accompanied by an increase in new tasks assigned to military forces serving under the UN flag. These include, *inter alia*, ensuring uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance to beleaguered populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia; human rights monitoring in El Salvador and Cambodia; the disarmament, containment and demobilisation of armed factions in Angola, Mozambique and Cambodia, and the preventive deployment of forces in Macedonia.

The UN has based its activities in the above cases on traditional or 'classical' concepts of operation. Experiences in the early 1990s have demonstrated that the 'customary principles and practices of peacekeeping' are totally inadequate as a basis for initiating and sustaining large scale multicomponent missions interposed in the context of actual or latent civil war. Actual operations have shown that the self-imposed operational restraints which characterise UN peacekeeping are now seriously undermining the ability of multinational forces to carry out their assigned missions. These include *ad hoc* mounting procedures, the absence of planning prior to deployment, a complex procurement system, restrictions on the use of force and covert intelligence and the effects of a broad geographical spread of military contingents and administrative personnel.

Civil wars fuelled by deep-seated hatreds and involving countless armed factions and the ready availability of weapons and ammunition, confront peacekeeping forces with a 'non-permissive operational environment'. In such an environment, the impartiality of UN forces is never recognised by all parties to the conflict. Moreover, in terms of military operations, interposition in the strategic sense becomes impossible and is complicated by the denial of the right to freedom of movement, traditionally seen as a key prerequisite for effective peacekeeping. Together with violations of permanent cease-fire agreements, the absence of front-lines and legitimate political authorities in operational areas, UN forces have been exposed to greater physical risk. This, in turn, is having a clear impact on the willingness of member states to provide soldiers for peacekeeping operations.

The extent to which consent, as an absolute requirement, can be postulated and adhered to in practice, remains problematic. In intra-state conflict the issue of whether peacekeeping operations should be conditional on the consent of all parties involved can only be decided on through considerations of the

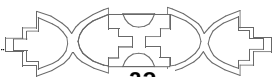


specifics of each individual case and must rest on the assessment of likely success and the potential cost involved for participating states. If the lack of co-operation between parties is limited to small scale resistance, banditry and looting, and the principal parties to the conflict remain committed to an agreement, a peacekeeping force may be empowered to confront it. This is more analogous to 'policing' functions and must be clearly distinguished from an enforcement action that does not rest on the consent of key parties and involves military operations that are forcibly directed towards imposing a solution. Moreover, even with regard to policing activities, UN peacekeeping forces must be geared towards obtaining a maximum measure of local support.⁷

MILITARY REQUIREMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY OPERATIONS

While operations in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Somalia and Angola differ markedly in the complexity and nature of their mandates, they all point to basic weaknesses which, although not new to the historical experience of peacekeeping, have been accentuated by the necessity of operating in the context of intra-state conflict where only sporadic consent has been obtained from parties to the conflict. Ten issues merit special consideration:

- The limited capabilities available to the Secretariat and, in particular, the lack of a planning cell to identify, co-ordinate and direct the logistics flow in the early stages of the operation.⁸
- The failure to set up secure communications and clarify reporting channels between the UN Headquarters and missions in the field.
- The failure to establish an effective command and control system in the field, in other words, the necessary arrangement of personnel, equipment and procedures that enables the Force Commander to plan, direct and control forces in support of the mission.
- The failure to provide Force Commanders with political and military intelligence that may have a bearing on their operations. Intelligence is a sensitive issue in the UN context, but one which must be addressed for several reasons. In the first place, a tactical intelligence capability is needed in order to avoid the kind of intelligence failures experienced in Somalia since May 1993.⁹ It is also necessary if the UN is serious about developing a preventive and early-warning capacity. It is also needed simply as an independent source of information, especially in politically and ethnically complex areas of deployment.
- The lack of UN doctrines for other than traditional and largely 'static' peacekeeping operations. The paucity of joint doctrine is particularly noticeable with regard to civilian-military operations in support of humanitarian objectives.
- Inadequate training of units from countries that do not have a tradition of contributing troops and the shortage of specialised units and personnel in the areas of logistics, communications and engineering.



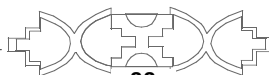
- Lack of tactical mobility to support operations within a deployment theatre.
- Insufficient attention to the requirements for force protection of UN forces in a semi-permissive operational environment.
- An overall lack of air capabilities for intra-theatre logistics airlifts, surveillance reconnaissance, communications and search and rescue tasks.
- Continued problems with financial support for peacekeeping operations; specifically, the persistence of structural or 'in-built' delays in the UN's budgetary allocation procedure that are caused in large part by the reluctance of the General Assembly to relinquish its prerogatives in the financial sphere.

A STUDY IN FAILURE: UN ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION II

The UN Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II) was established in June 1991 to verify cease-fire agreements set out in the Bicesse Accords of May 1991, and to observe the elections organised by the National Electoral Council. Although the operation was small compared to those in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Somalia, it has been an excellent illustration of the weaknesses outlined above. Angola has received far less coverage than other operations even though the scale of the humanitarian tragedy following the resumption of civil war is unquestionably greater than in other areas of UN involvement. The Angolan case also demonstrates the limits to the UN's achievements if the Security Council lacks the political will to commit adequate resources to an operation.

Although the UN had been closely involved in monitoring elections in Namibia in 1989 (UNTAG) and Nicaragua in February 1990 (UNAVEN), it learnt no lessons from them. The logistic challenges facing UNAVEM II were far more daunting in Angola, a country nearly two-thirds the size of Western Europe with a non-existent infrastructure. In May 1992 the *Financial Times* reported that "*many diplomats*" had already concluded that "*unless there is additional external help, the poll will either have to be delayed or be so poorly organised as to lack credibility*".¹⁰ In fact, when the elections were held on 29 and 30 September 1992, none of the key provisions of the original peace accord - including the demobilisation of rival armies, their cantonment, the custody of weapons and the extension of central administration to the whole of the country - had been fulfilled. As soon as the elections were over, UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, claimed massive fraud, refused to accept the results and left the newly formed Angolan Armed Forces. Within weeks, the country had relapsed into civil war, which claimed more than 50 000 lives until early 1994.

To observe and verify the Angolan elections for which 4.83 million voters had registered, UNAVEM II deployed 400 unarmed electoral observers from ninety different nationalities, fourteen helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft. The observers operated in teams of two and had to rely on sample observation, given the fact that there were 6 000 polling stations in the country. Although all eighteen provinces and most of the municipalities were covered, observer



teams could only spend an average of twenty minutes at each station, enough to observe four votes being cast.¹¹ Observation of the vote-counting was even more incomplete, as the Electoral Law required this to take place at each of the polling stations. As a result, the Secretary-General acknowledged in his report on the elections that "... *only a fraction of them could be observed*".¹² Moreover, the wide range of nationalities represented in the observer teams and a critical lack of Portuguese-speaking officials, created major linguistic difficulties throughout the monitoring process.¹³

The effectiveness of the UNAVEM operation was also impaired by poor logistic planning and an acute shortage of vehicles, air support for transport within Angola and reliable communications.¹⁴ In order to deploy their electoral teams, supplies and communications network in the provinces, UNAVEM and the UNDP had to improvise "*the largest air support operation ... ever mounted by the UN*". Through "*ingenuity and good will*", as the Secretary-General's Special Representative put it, 45 helicopters and fifteen fixed-wing aircraft were borrowed from member states and chartered from commercial sources. Voting material, lighting, food, water and blankets still often arrived late, if at all, at polling stations.

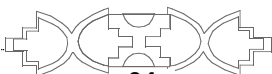
The fact that the observer teams were deployed so thinly made it more difficult for the UN to deny UNITA's charge that the elections were "*recognisedly fraudulent and irregular*". UN headquarters in New York also failed to pick up danger signals that were emanating from Angola in the months before the elections. Had these been noted, the elections might have been postponed until the demobilisation programme was either completed or deemed to be "*irreversible*".¹⁵ Along with the failure to implement other aspects of the peace plan, the stage was set for the resumption of a brutal and ruinous civil war.¹⁶

The return of civil war to Angola, however, cannot be blamed solely on the UN. As noted above, the powers which sponsored the Peace Accord (the United States, the Soviet Union and Portugal) failed to take account of conflict in Angola and paid little attention to the need for institutionalising confidence building measures after the election, irrespective of the outcome.

CONCLUSION

International violence, especially after the collapse of multi-ethnic state structures, occurs primarily at the sub-state level, and member states of the UN should examine more effective intervention measures suited to these kinds of conflicts. The UN Charter deals essentially with inter-state conflict and, as such, does not contain provisions "*by which the Security Council or General Assembly may relate to non-state agencies such as liberation movements, communal minorities, or political parties*".¹⁷ This represents the most obvious deficiency in the Secretary-General's An Agenda for Peace submitted to the Security Council in June 1992.

In launching future peacekeeping operations, careful consideration must be given to the long term political and administrative arrangements which an operation intends to promote. Security Council mandates must be practical, and should not simply reflect the moral indignation and emotion of the moment. Parallel to this, the UN must be prepared to withdraw or abstain from



becoming involved in conflict where its presence does not reinforce a broader political process geared towards resolving the conflict. The adoption of this course of action has been met with reluctance, though it is clearly preferred to an open-ended peacekeeping commitment which, as the Secretary-General observed in the case of Croatia in late November 1992, “may involve the [Security] Council in a large and expensive commitment for an indefinite period of time, without any certainty that the operation will be fulfilled”.¹⁸ In the absence of consensus among states about the basis for international security, the UN will be forced to concentrate resources on improving existing mechanisms and operations with reliable military as well as political objectives.¹⁹ This may be more modest than the ambitious ideas flouted at the Summit Meeting in January 1992, but it is also the only feasible course of action.

-
1. Laurence Martin, *Peacekeeping as a Growth Industry*, The National Interest 32, Summer 1993, pp. 3-12.
 2. The phrase belongs to former Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Marrack Goulding. See, Marrack Goulding, *The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping*, Cyril Foster Lecture, University of Oxford, 4 March 1993.
 3. See for example, *Hurd urges Ghali to extend peacekeeping role of UN*, Independent, 14 January 1992; *World Leaders to call for enhanced UN role*, Financial Times, 31 January 1992.
 4. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, New York: UN Department of Public Information, 1992.
 5. Adam Roberts, *The United Nations and International Security*, Survival35(2), Summer 1993, p. 3.
 6. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Empowering the United Nations*, Foreign Affairs, Winter 1992/93, p. 100.
 7. The problem of consent and ‘grey-area’ operation in civil wars and intra-state conflict have been discussed more fully in Adelphi Paper 281, *Whither UN Peacekeeping?*, London: Brasseys/IISS, 1993, pp. 10-11, 23-24, 26-39 and 75-77.
 8. For a personal account of the *ad hoc* nature of pre-deployment planning in support of peacekeeping operations, see Lewis Mackenzie, *Military Realities of UN Peacekeeping Operations*, RUSI Journal, February 1993, p. 21.
 9. *Intelligence Failure Cited in Setbacks Against Aideed*, The Washington Post, 8 October 1993.
 10. *Angola hovers between recovery and the abyss*, Financial Times, 11 May 1992.
 11. Details based on *Further Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II)*, S/24858, 25 November 1992, par. 7.
 12. *Ibid.*, par. 10.
 13. Personal interviews with election monitors attached to UNAVEM II in September 1992.
 14. *So far so good in Angolan election*, Financial Times, 3 October 1992. By contrast, UNTAG involved more than 6000 UN civilian and military personnel in the process of supervising Namibia’s transition to independence in 1989.
 15. The elections planned in Mozambique have been postponed precisely for those reasons.
 16. See Mats Berdal, *The Resumption of Civil War in Angola*, *Jane’s Intelligence Review* 5(6), pp. 284-285.



17. Sydney Bailey, *The United Nations and the Termination of Armed Conflict 1946-1964*, International Affairs, Summer 1982, p. 469.
18. *Further Report of the Secretary general pursuant to SC. res. 743 (1992)*, S/24848, 24 November 1992, par. 46.
19. On the reluctance of the Permanent Five see, for example, Malcolm Rifkind, *Peacekeeping or Peacemaking? Implications and Prospects*, RUSI Journal, April 1993, pp. 1-5.

