
THE FICTION OF A U.N. STANDING ARMY

—ALEX MORRISON—

We made at least a beginning then. If, on that foundation, we do not build something more permanent and stronger, we will once again have ignored realities, rejected opportunities and betrayed our trust. Will we never learn?

—Lester B. Pearson¹

Introduction

In response to such seemingly hopeless tragedies as those besetting Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, and in light of the diminished Cold War tensions and the prospects for cooperation in the United Nations, many scholars naturally look to the establishment of a true world army as a possible solution. A U.N. standing armed force, representing the values and objectives of the global community, would be able to meet international crises swiftly and forcefully, they hope. This paper will argue that the solutions do not in fact lie in that direction; such thinking is mistaken and misleading.

The U.N. Charter provides for dispute settlement by employing both peaceful means and, when necessary, organized force. Chapter VI of the Charter, "Pacific Settlement of Disputes," addresses the former, while Chapter VII is concerned with "Action With Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression." Furthermore, Chapter VII outlines the functions of a Military Staff Committee (M.S.C.) and addresses the permanent assignment of forces to the United Nations by member states. For many reasons, the intentions of those who drafted the Charter have never been realized: not one

1. Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, from his Nobel Peace Prize lecture, 11 December 1957, referring to the 1956 establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force I.

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country has negotiated a Chapter VII agreement with the United Nations. In all of its conflict resolution endeavors, the United Nations has relied on voluntary contributions of troops, materiel and equipment from member states.

Whenever a new peacekeeping operation is launched, or an ongoing mission encounters difficulties, the idea of erecting a U.N. military force reemerges. Recent recommendations that the United Nations establish a permanent armed force, as suggested in the U.N. Secretary General's report *An Agenda for Peace*,² and by Sir Brian Urquhart,³ once again have generated interest in such action. These debates have created the perception that if only the United Nations had a military force at its disposal, the world would be safe. However, even if the United Nations possessed its own standing army, whether member states would permit its use to cope with the troubles in Somalia, for example, is far from clear.

Solutions to the world's security problems can be reached only when citizens, politicians, diplomats, and international civil servants dedicate themselves to the creation of the necessary political framework. While military forces may be capable of enforcing order in situations of crisis, true security and stability cannot be attained in the absence of common political objectives. Further, the implementation of a permanent U.N. army over which member states would have relatively little control is impossible.

Any consideration of the use of military force by the United Nations must begin by examining the intent of the organization's founders. This paper will outline the early planning that led to the establishment of the United Nations, including some of the opinions expressed by various world leaders and reporters at that time. Then, it will describe how the founders envisaged the United Nations using the force, and the size of the military establishment. Additionally, the paper will look at the work of the M.S.C., as well as various suggestions made during the past four decades by those with a special interest in the matter. The paper will conclude with a presentation of the views that have been expressed on the subject since the Gulf War of 1990-1991, followed by a brief assessment of contemporary world conditions, and some recommendations to improve present peacekeeping arrangements.

Early Planning for the Post-War World

Near the end of 1943, when Americans were devising their plans for an international security organization, Secretary of State Cordell Hull told President Franklin Roosevelt that he had developed a course of action "based on two central assumptions":

2. *An Agenda For Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, Report of the Secretary General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, 17 June 1992.

3. Brian Urquhart, "For A U.N. Volunteer Military Force," in *The New York Review of Books*, 10 June 1993: 3. See also Robert Oakley, "A U.N. Volunteer Force — The Prospects," in *The New York Review of Books*, 15 July 1993: 52.

First, that the four major powers will pledge themselves and will consider themselves morally bound not to go to war against each other or against any other nation, and to co-operate with each other and with other peaceloving states in maintaining the peace; and second, that each of them will maintain adequate forces and will be willing to use such forces as circumstances require to prevent or suppress all cases of aggression.⁴

In August 1944, in his opening address to the Dumbarton Oaks meeting, Secretary Hull provided a clear rationale for establishing the United Nations. He argued that the new body must be able to provide for

peaceful settlement of international disputes and for the joint use of force, if necessary, to prevent or suppress threats to the peace or breaches of the peace. It is generally agreed that any peace and security organization would surely fail unless backed by force to be used ultimately in case of failure of all the other means for the maintenance of peace. That force must be available promptly, in adequate measure, and with certainty. The nations of the world should maintain, according to their capacities, sufficient forces available for joint action when necessary to prevent breaches of the peace.⁵

Early planning for the United Nations was conducted only by the major powers. Middle and small powers had trouble even determining what major powers were doing, let alone contributing to the negotiations. The major powers always intended that they would establish and control the new world organization.⁶

Press and Political Views

In addition to politicians and diplomats, the media speculated on the shape of the post-war world. In August 1944, noting the start of the Dumbarton Oaks talks, *The Economist* reported that:

The Great Powers have apparently considered the failure of Geneva, and there is general agreement that the League failed not from inherent faults of structure, but because the Great Powers did not

4. J.F. Green, "The Dumbarton Oaks Conversations," Department of State Bulletin (1944): 459. Cited in B.B. Ferenez, *Enforcing International Law — A Way to World Peace: A Documentary History and Analysis* (London: Oceana Publications, 1983): 425.

5. Ferenez: 425.

6. As one of the countries on the outside, Canada tried very hard to learn what was taking place at Dumbarton Oaks. Canadian officials had to be careful not to let one interlocutor know what information had been passed by an inside contact. See, for example, Radical Mandarin, *The Memoirs of Escott Reid* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), Chapter 14.

make it work. . . . World order rests in the last analysis not only upon Great Power responsibility but also upon Great Power magnanimity and moderation — in other words, simply on their will to keep the peace.⁷

Sir Arthur Cadogan, the United Kingdom representative at Dumbarton Oaks, said that only the great powers possessed the necessary force to ensure that a new security organization would work properly. Only they would determine whether there would be war or peace.⁸ Sir Arthur also believed that the great powers had to agree on any course of action, or the peace would be shattered. Unless the rest of the world behaved in the manner desired by the great powers, these states would “impose some Great Power dictatorship on the rest of the world.”⁹ British parliamentarians sought assurances that countries attending the San Francisco conference would be taken seriously. As the conference unfolded, the British endured great pressure to accept the results of the Dumbarton Oaks gathering without change.

Mr. Andrei Gromyko, leader of the USSR delegation opined that soon, “the freedom-loving peoples” of the world would win the war. After that was accomplished, future aggression would not be tolerated.¹⁰

The French government, on the other hand, was reluctant to associate itself with the new initiative, for fear of its failure. France also wanted the Security Council to have armed forces permanently available for use by the United Nations. As for Canada, Prime Minister MacKenzie King, speaking after a meeting of the British Commonwealth in London, said that Canada would not accept that its military forces could be deployed to a theatre of operations simply on a decision of the Security Council.¹¹

Despite the press coverage of the conference, most citizens were unaware of the great powers’ determination to implement the main features of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, especially with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. One analyst noted that non-Big Five governments simply were “handed” the proposals.

This set of proposals provided a starting point for the discussions and for the criticisms and suggestions that constituted the bulk of the proceedings at San Francisco. It provided an ending point as well, for there was no question of jettisoning the proposals for some other plan. There was thorough discussion, and modifications were made; but the discussion and the modifications took place within the limits set by the great powers.¹²

7. “Notes of the Week,” *The Economist*, 26 August 1944, Vol. CXLVII, No. 5270.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XXI, No. 18.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *The Bulletin of International News*, Vol. XXII, No. 9.

12. Dorothy V. Jones, *Code of Peace: Ethics and Security in the World of the Warlord States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 109.

The great powers considered it natural that they would set the agenda as most of the rest of the world was either destroyed or under colonial rule. Notwithstanding their uninvolvedness, the middle and smaller powers which had played significant roles in the victories of the Allies sought more consultation with the great powers.

Early Conceptions of a U.N. Military Force

Throughout the Second World War, allied leaders were planning for post-war security. With the destruction and suffering of the war foremost in their minds, they were determined to put into place structures which would, in the words of the U.N. Charter, "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Those who designed the United Nations emphasized the need for "teeth" in the organization, in order to coerce those countries which were unreceptive to friendly persuasion or other steps short of force. The collective military might of the victorious powers was to be mobilized and ready for immediate deployment anywhere in the world where a conflict had broken out or was likely to occur. In the final event, the victors would keep the peace.¹³

To coordinate the great powers and their military forces, the Charter established the M.S.C., composed of the chiefs of staff of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The M.S.C. was to advise the Council

on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security, the employment and command of forces placed at its disposal.¹⁴

In addition, member states of the United Nations agreed to make available to the Security Council the necessary armed forces for maintaining international peace and security. The force would contain two million troops, thousands of planes and hundreds of ships.¹⁵

A U.S. Department of State film produced in 1945 tried to explain how the new organization would operate. The Security Council would "represent the power of the world," and the five permanent members would cooperate to "put down" threats to world peace. The film shows a meeting of the Council in which the representative of a country refuses to cooperate and walks out of the chamber. Instantly, the Council cuts all communications and transport links to the state in question. The M.S.C. then prepares a plan, and the forces which have been placed at the disposal of the Council are mobilized immediately. "The Council acts not to wage war but to stop war before it can start," the voiceover

13. "Must have teeth in it" is how it is put in *The Economist* of 22 July 1944, Vol. CXLVII, No. 5265. There is also a reference to "teeth" in the 14 October 1944, Vol. CXLVII, No. 5277 issue. See also G.R. Berridge and A. Jennings, eds. *Diplomacy at the UN* (London: MacMillan Press, 1985). Both Peter Calvo-coressi and Sir Anthony Parsons use the word "teeth"; the latter mentions "coercive."

14. U.N. Charter, Chapter VII.

15. "Big 5 to Provide 1/2 of force," *New York Times*, 24 March 1946: 1.

intones, and to that end must deploy "the world riot squad."¹⁶ In the film, peace, harmony, and good sense prevail, even when war is necessary to prevent war.

In fact, none of this came to pass. To be sure, the Security Council and the M.S.C. did try to create a U.N. military force and suggested how member states might contribute. But the Cold War which followed World War II ensured that any meaningful progress towards fulfilling the intent of the Charter would be blocked by a Security Council veto.

Attempts to Organize a U.N. Military Establishment

Governments have espoused the concept of "war against war" for as long as they have been threatened by force. The League of Nations at one time considered a French suggestion that sanctions be carried out by an organized League army. Even though the United States was not a member of the League of Nations, President Woodrow Wilson rejected the idea, because he opposed placing American forces at the disposal of an international body. At the 1932 World Disarmament Conference in Geneva, the French tried again to establish an international army but failed. Eventually they triumphed, however, as the U.N. Charter resembles French suggestions.¹⁷

Having decided that the United Nations would have the ability to deter or defeat aggression, the Big Five set to work even before the Council had been formally established. In December 1945, they announced that the M.S.C. could not be "formally constituted until after the Council had been formed."

The delegates' proposal that the United Nations employ the atomic bomb to deter aggression was not regarded as extraordinary. In a *New York Times* editorial following the first meeting of the M.S.C., which was held on 4 February 1946, the author clearly indicated that the bomb would be used if necessary. U.N. force would have to be "overwhelming" as "the world has become too small for little wars by aggressors."¹⁸ Subsequently, the Americans chose not to include atomic weapons in their tentative offer. With negotiations in progress at the United Nations to prohibit their use, the Americans believed allowing atomic weapons to become part of the M.S.C. arsenal would not be logical or desirable.

That the M.S.C. decided to "limit" the size of the U.N. military force to two million personnel illustrates the seriousness with which the members of the Security Council approached the task of "saving the world from the scourge of war." Of the two million envisaged, one half were to come from the Big Five, with the other half provided by the remaining U.N. members. Two million troops were considered sufficient, because the force would be used simply in

16. "Watchtower Over Tomorrow," film produced by the U.S. Department of State in cooperation with the Motion Picture Industry for showing in movie theatres, 1945.

17. For an excellent account of efforts to establish international military forces, see the Historical Appendix in G. Rosner, *The United Nations Emergency Force* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

18. "Conference Attended by 17 High-Ranking Officers of Big 5," *New York Times*, 5 February 1946: 22.

situations involving “small and medium powers” — not against any of the Big Five.

In October 1944, President Roosevelt indicated that he would agree to allocate U.S. forces for the Security Council’s use without any further permission from the U.S. government. Roosevelt said that words concerning the future of world peace must be accompanied by action; the new world organization would have to be able to use force immediately if necessary. The U.S. Congress rejected this view, and the idea was dropped.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the seriousness with which the task of raising an international military force was approached and the seeming enormity of the numbers contemplated, no one intended the force to be stationed in one place under a single commander. “Earmarked” was the term used by the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and other contemporary media accounts of the planned force.

Under Article 43 of the U.N. Charter, a member state provides armed forces only after the negotiation of individual agreements between that state and the United Nations. The Security Council cannot conscript or otherwise force individuals or units to serve. Furthermore, the Charter does not indicate what action the United Nations must take if a country reneges on its agreement with the Security Council to provide troops.²⁰

The M.S.C. Report and Subsequent Developments

The M.S.C. report, “General Principles Governing the Organization of the Armed Forces Made Available to the Security Council by Member Nations of the United Nations,” was made public in late April 1947. The Big Five agreed on only 25 of the report’s 41 articles. Shortly thereafter, the matter languished. During the next decade, however, several suggestions generated attention, including the creation of a U.N. “guard,” Canada’s call for a study on a permanent force, and a 1952 suggestion by the Secretary General for a “volunteer reserve.”

The idea of a standing military force was ignored until the Suez Crisis of 1956. During the feverish discussions in the United Nations, then Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson created the idea of peacekeeping. He was subsequently awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for this idea.

Continuing Refinement of the Concept for a U.N. Army

The first mention in the U.N. General Assembly of the establishment of a Standing Military Force came from Pakistani Foreign Minister Firoz Khan Noon.

19. Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., (ed.) with Joe Alex Morris, *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952): 112.

20. For a discussion of these points, see Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973): 299-300; Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1958): 214-216; Rosalyn Higgins, *United Nations Peacekeeping: 1946-1967, Documents and Commentary*, Vol 2. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970): 175.

On 28 November 1956, he suggested that the United Nations Emergency Force, then on service in the Suez area, be made the core of a permanent army. In his plan, the United Nations would hire, train, and pay the soldiers who would be located in a number of "strategic areas" around the world.

In a *Foreign Affairs* article, Pearson proposed that the United Nations approach peacekeeping "in a more organized and permanent way."²¹ The press used terms which misled audiences on the subject. The 1957 *New York Times Index* mentioned the "need for a permanent force" while the *Globe and Mail* employed the headline: "Standing UN Force Proposed by Pearson."²² In fact, Pearson had called on governments to "be willing to earmark smaller forces for . . . limited duty" and for the building of "a halfway house at the crossroads of war." He outlined four "tentative principles governing the establishment of United Nations machinery." These were:

1. Member governments, excluding the permanent members of the Security Council, should be invited to signify a willingness in principle to contribute contingents to the United Nations for purposes that are essentially noncombatant, such as, for example, the supervision of agreed cease-fires and comparable peace supervisory functions.
2. Since the Security Council is charged with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace, members who have sought and secured election to the non-permanent seats on it would normally be expected to be among those signifying a willingness to contribute contingents to such a force.
3. For effective organization, there would have to be some central United Nations machinery. The Secretary General should have a permanent Military Adviser who, with a small staff, might assume responsibility for the direction of other truce supervision arrangements which have been or might be agreed on.
4. If at any time a peace supervision force were constituted, the Secretary General would require an advisory committee similar to that which now assists him in connection with the UNEF in Egypt.²³

Pearson indicated that these suggestions concerned "machinery," and emphasized that "in the last resort, individual governments must determine whether the best laid plans of the United Nations are to succeed or fail." He did not advocate the establishment of a permanent force in the sense envisaged in the Charter.

Yet the idea persists that creating a standing military force ready to spring

21. Lester B. Pearson, "Force for U.N.," *Foreign Affairs* 35 (April 1957): 395-404.

22. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 3 April 1957: 15. See also John J. Noble, "The United Nations' Security and Peacekeeping Role," Faculty seminar program, Harvard National Model United Nations 1991, Boston, 1 March 1991.

23. Pearson: 395-404.

into action at the call of the Security Council would constitute a panacea to the world's ills. There were always those ready to renew the call and to explain how the force might work. Although most individuals and organizations in favor of a U.N. military force did note the obstacles that would have to be overcome to ensure a smooth operation, the zeal for the idea itself obscured a realistic appreciation of the practical difficulties involved.

Intermittent calls for a U.N. standing military force continued for the next two decades. It seemed as if every real or perceived international crisis served as a spur for articles which would have the institution of a cure-all U.N. army as their theme.

Contemporary Developments

Following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990, discussion of a standing U.N. military force once again arose. In the *New York Review of Books*, former U.N. Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Sir Brian Urquhart called for the establishment of a "system for peace and security." After reviewing the history of the Gulf War and U.N. actions to end it, Urquhart recommended that the M.S.C. "be required to study and report on the extent to which the provision of forces under Article 43 is still a practical option in present conditions." However, Urquhart did not argue that this was "a practical option." Similar to Pearson's warning, Urquhart concluded that, in order for international peace and security to improve, governments must exercise the necessary political will.²⁴

Others quickly followed Urquhart's lead. A paper prepared for a conference on "Defining A New World Order" advocated three levels of forces. The first level, a 500,000-strong "standing-reserve peace force" would consist of units under national command that would be able to conduct major operations, including nuclear missions. The second level, a "rapid-response peace force . . . would be smaller, more centrally organized, and more tightly ordered under U.N. command." Its members "would be tasked primarily for U.N. missions." The third level would be a "Permanent Peacekeeping Force."²⁵ This force would be under United Nations command, with some parts being centrally based and trained.²⁶ This "multi-level" approach was also endorsed in a report prepared for the Trilateral Commission.²⁷

Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, in a September 1991 speech, indicated that "we also favour re-thinking the limits of national sovereignty in a world where problems respect no borders."²⁸ Although not specifi-

24. Brian Urquhart, "Learning from the Gulf," *The New York Review of Books*, 7 March 1991.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Alan K. Henrikson, *Defining a New World Order*, discussion paper prepared for the Roundtable on Defining a New World Order. Medford: The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1991: 42-46.

27. *Keeping The Peace In The Post-Cold War Era: Strengthening Multilateral Peacekeeping*, Draft Report to the Trilateral Commission, March 1993.

28. Brian Mulroney, the Right Honourable, "On the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary

cally advocating a U.N. military force, he put Canada strongly on the side of those who favor a more interventionist approach by the United Nations.

An Agenda for Peace

On 31 January 1992, the Security Council held its first meeting of heads of state. Its concluding statement noted that the Council must have the strength necessary to provide for peace and security. To that end, the Secretary General was invited to analyze and report on the ways and means by which the Council could be made more effective.²⁹

At that meeting, President Mitterrand of France announced his country's intention to allocate 1,000 soldiers to U.N. peacekeeping duties. The French offer was tempered, however, by the accompanying demand that the M.S.C. operate as envisaged in the Charter. The French proposal received much attention and was treated as a new initiative. A number of other countries had for decades maintained U.N. stand-by forces. Further, it apparently never occurred to others to speculate whether France would be willing to give the United Nations absolute power over the use of its contingents. Such an agreement is highly unlikely. If individual member states "give" troops to the United Nations, they relinquish absolute command and control of their forces. Occasions may arise where the United Nations would employ a state's military units in situations not in accordance with that state's interests.

As the Secretary General began his work, there was no shortage of advice from writers and columnists. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* editorialized that "a small rapid intervention force under the Council's control" might be the way to proceed.³⁰ A Canadian columnist writing from England argued that the French offer would give the United Nations a standing military force but that the offer would not be accepted due to American objections.³¹ Flora Lewis of the *New York Times* lauded the French offer of 1,000 soldiers but called for a U.N. "permanent force in readiness, loyal to its flag and to no state," and suggested the Gurkhas as the obvious choice.³² The idea that this small, but superbly well-trained and professional portion of the British Army be turned into the "enforcement force" of the Security Council, and thus subject to all the vagaries of international politics, is simply unthinkable.

The Secretary General's report, *An Agenda for Peace*, addresses the formation of peace enforcement units envisaged in Article 43 of the Charter, and includes allocation of forces on a permanent basis. It is unclear whether the arrangements or the units would be permanent. The Secretary General also addresses regional security arrangements, and financial and logistical support.³³

Convocation of Stanford University," 29 September 1991.

29. "Note by the President of the Security Council," United Nations Security Council Document S/23500, 31 January 1992.

30. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 1 February 1992: 1.

31. Andrew Cohen, *Financial Post*, 7 February 1992.

32. Flora Lewis, "Gurkhas Can Solve the U.N.'s Problems," *New York Times*, 8 February 1992: 21.

33. *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, Report of the Secretary

The Calls Continue

Although there is no consensus among the permanent members of the Security Council for either the negotiation of the Article 43 arrangements or for any moves in the direction of a Standing Military Force, calls for a U.N. force continue. The U.N. Association of the United States, for example, champions the idea of a permanent force and recommends that the United Nations enter into arrangements with NATO, or other regional organizations; the troops of those bodies would be made available to the United Nations.³⁴ This latter point currently is the subject of much debate which centers on whether such forces would be under U.N. control or whether they would operate under a separate contract.

The 1992 report of the U.N. Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (the Committee of 34) notes that "some delegations" called for consideration of various aspects of a standing military force, including a study that examines Chapter VII, which deals with assigning forces to the United Nations. One of the Committee's recommendations was that the Secretary General should take action to encourage member states to maintain forces on stand-by status.³⁵ The Committee's 1993 report noted that "many delegations" lauded the Secretary General's moves in the area of stand-by forces. Further,

some delegations considered that, under special circumstances and in rare cases, the concept underlying peace enforcement units might have validity and that the international community should not shy away from making use of that concept.³⁶

A *New York Times* editorial entitled "A Foreign Legion For The World" proposed the establishment of "a permanent, multinational cavalry on call," and referred approvingly to a plan put forth by American Senator David Boren. The plan called for a volunteer force ready to move anywhere in the world on short notice and which would serve as "a sobering deterrent to petty aggressors or Somalia-style warlords."³⁷ One military analyst called the idea "mad."³⁸

In his recent book *International Peacekeeping*, Paul Diehl comments extensively on the idea of a U.N. standing military force. Discussing the characteristics that such a force should possess, he evaluates the rationale for a permanent establishment with regard to professionalism, reaction time, efficiency, and financial stability. He does not endorse the idea, concluding that "too many analysts treat a permanent UN peacekeeping force as a panacea for threats to international

General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council, 17 June 1992.

34. The U.N. Association of the United States of America, *Partners For Peace* (New York: The U.N. Association of the United States of America, 1992).

35. United Nations, *1992 Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations*.

36. United Nations, *1993 Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations*.

37. "A Foreign Legion for the World," *New York Times*, 1 September 1992: 16.

38. *The Toronto Sun*, 4 September 1992.

peacekeeping and security and for the flaws of existing peacekeeping strategy."³⁹

Addressing the U.N. Security Council in January of 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin advocated the establishment of a U.N. "special rapid-response mechanism."⁴⁰ For his part, President Clinton outlined a number of questions the United States would pose before it took part in additional peacekeeping missions. While he did not specifically mention a permanent force, he did pledge American support for

the creation of a genuine U.N. peacekeeping headquarters with a planning staff, with access to timely intelligence, with a logistics unit that can be deployed on a moment's notice, and a modern operations center with global communications.⁴¹

These few examples illustrate that the idea of a standing military force is attractive, but untenable. It often seems as if discussion and consideration are shields behind which it is acknowledged that no action can be taken.

An Assessment

The current international situation requires more sophisticated political solutions than merely raising a U.N. army. It is inconceivable that states would unconditionally assign elements of their armed forces to the United Nations. That states act in their own best interests is one of the most basic principles of international relations. National interests often coincide with those of the United Nations, but the opposite is also true. In instances where they coincide, nations may willingly allocate troops to U.N. peacekeeping missions, but they will not do so without conditions tying them to home governments.

These conditions will focus *inter alia* on matters such as the use of force, deployment areas, and chain of command. Where these conditions are not met, national contingent commanders will consult with capitals before agreeing to any request from the senior U.N. commander. The ultimate step is that of non-participation or even withdrawal. Both are happening in Somalia. The Italians are withdrawing because they disagree with the confrontational attitude of the U.N. force, whereas President Clinton has announced a pull-out because of American unwillingness to accept the risks associated with peacekeeping. Thus, the notion that the United Nations will establish a military force composed of dedicated national contingents should be discarded.

U.N. recruitment of its own army is another available option. However, individual and collective problems obstruct the attainment of such a goal.

39. Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1993).

40. Provisional Verbatim Record of the 3046th Meeting of the UN Security Council, 31 January 1992.

41. President Clinton, *Address to the U.N. General Assembly*, 28 September 1993, United States Embassy: 93-96.

Several issues confront the formation of an independent force for the United Nations, for example:

- Would a U.N. military force need to be racially and geographically balanced? Would quotas be required to establish specific numbers of administrative support and combat personnel?
- Who would train the new force and how would national training characteristics be downplayed in favor of the new U.N. philosophy? How would recruits, instructors, and commanders at every level overcome their national biases and previous training? How would national, religious, cultural, and ethnic preferences be accommodated?
- Where would the force be located? Should it be centralized or decentralized? Would national governments allow the force freedom of movement and interaction with the local economy and population?
- Would states press their soldiers and citizens into volunteering in order to raise hard currency? What code of discipline would be used? Who would administer punishments? What would be the terms of engagement?
- Must senior command and staff appointments be rotated, or can the best person be chosen?
- To whom will the commander of the force be responsible: the Secretary General himself, the Military Staff Committee, or the Security Council solely?

These few questions illustrate the difficulties of establishing such a force. If current peacekeeping operations are to be taken as any indication, the prospects are bleak.

The continued development and deployment of internationally coordinated military responses to crises has proven an effective measure in restoring short-term stability. However, peacekeeping need not be conducted by a permanent U.N. military force. Perhaps the best approach to the challenge of the military side of peacekeeping is that now being undertaken by the United Nations: the establishment of a list of military units and assets individual countries would be willing to contribute to a U.N. peacekeeping force, provided that the aims and objectives of such a mission do not conflict with the national interests of the country concerned, and that those resources can be made available without detriment to the other missions of the forces.

Contemporary global security crises are complex; they cannot be solved solely by a military response. "The peacekeeping umbrella" must be expanded to shelter all the members of the "new peacekeeping partnership." Accordingly, the following may serve as a new definition of peacekeeping: actions designed to enhance international peace, security, and stability authorized by competent national and international organizations and which are undertaken cooperatively by military, humanitarian, good governance, civilian police, and other interested agencies and groups.

Military and civilian "peacekeeping partners" must interact, at all levels, much earlier and with greater scope. U.N. specialized agencies must also be considered full peacekeeping participants. Critics should remember that not

long ago the notion of using military forces to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid was unthinkable. Now, it is widely accepted as the norm.

The U.N. Secretary General has abandoned any hope of establishing a permanent U.N. force. Former Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King's words remain true: Countries will simply not assign, without condition, their military forces to the United Nations. Peacekeeping missions are but instruments of the political will, as are national and international humanitarian aid operations. Until U.N. member states devote as much attention to solving the underlying political causes of national and international disputes as they have to the creation of a U.N. permanent military force, true solutions will remain elusive.

