

UN Operations: The Political–Military Interface

CHRISTOPHER BRADY and SAM DAWS

The dilemmas raised by UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Somalia have focused attention on the political–military interface. This article places recent experiences in the context of the history of the United Nations' enforcement action and its relationship with UN peacekeeping. It is divided into three parts which address UN enforcement measures from 1945 to 1991, the use of Chapter VII resolutions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, and the challenges ahead. Through a detailed examination of case histories, specific problems are identified, remedies suggested and future options explored.

During the cold war the United Nations authorized only 13 peacekeeping operations; since its end there have been a further 19 by the UN's reckoning. Recent operations have witnessed a blurring of the demarcation lines between peacekeeping and peace enforcement and the use of mandates related to Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Meanwhile the organizational machinery in New York and the field has struggled to cope. Accusations of incompetence have been widespread. What is not clear is how far these problems are structurally endemic, circumstantial or simply due to overload; and thus whether they are insoluble or easily remedied. This article addresses the problems of political–military interfacing within the UN by looking, in turn, at enforcement measures, peacekeeping and the challenges of the post-cold war period.

Enforcement Measures

'Two operations, Bosnia and Somalia, really raise most of the difficult military–political interface issues; the others, clearly based on consent, impartiality etc., are simpler.' So argued Shashi Tharoor, Special Assistant to the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in late November 1993.¹ Both the Bosnian and Somalian operations were mounted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

This article reflects the personal views of the authors only and does not represent the views of either the Royal Naval College or the UN Association (UK).

During the cold war period, peacekeeping was the preferred mechanism for UN involvement in disputes whilst, with the exception of Korea and the Congo, peace enforcement was often too sensitive an issue to be considered. Nevertheless, there were several Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) relating to Chapter VII which indicate policy precedents with respect to enforcement measures, though failure to implement them commonly followed. For example, SCR 54 (15 July 1948) threatened that failure to comply with the ceasefire in Palestine would 'risk Security Council action under Chapter VII'. The parties failed to comply but no action was taken. SCR 232 (16 December 1966) referred to Articles 39 and 41 because 'the situation in Southern Rhodesia constitute[d] a threat to international peace and security', and imposed 'various restrictions and sanctions'. Again the resolution was unenforceable on account of the lack of great power unanimity. A similar situation arose with regard to sanctions against South Africa. The United States and the United Kingdom, in particular, ensured that the embargo was largely ineffective. During the Iran–Iraq war, SCR 598 (20 July 1987) referred to a 'breach of the peace' and action under Articles 39 and 40. It demanded that Iran and Iraq observe a ceasefire, which they failed to do. Once more the interests of the major powers did not permit genuine enforcement of the resolutions.

However, in June 1950 the well-known conjunction of circumstances had permitted the UN's first genuine enforcement action. The Security Council was able to avoid the Soviet veto and determine that 'the armed attack on the Republic of Korea . . . constitute[d] a breach of the peace and call[ed] for a ceasefire' (SCR 82). Subsequent resolutions recommended 'that UN Members furnish such assistance . . . as may be necessary to repel the armed attack' (SCR 83) and that all military forces and other assistance be under a US unified command which was also authorized to use the UN flag (SCR 84).

Ironically the SCRs for this first enforcement action contained no direct reference to Chapter VII or any of its specific articles, though SCR 82 did mention 'a breach of the peace' from which it is possible to deduce a connection to Article 39. Nevertheless, SCRs 83 and 84 effectively legitimized US military action. Some commentators have contended that it was a post-facto legitimization since the US representative informed the other members of the Council meeting on 27 June 1950 that the 'United States air and sea forces had been ordered to give the troops of the Korean government cover and support'.² This announcement came *before* the suggestion for SCR 83. The United States subsequently argued that, in any event, their actions were legitimate under Article 51. Although some analysts, including Hans Kelsen (see note 2) believe that Korea was not a

Chapter VII enforcement action because the SCRs contained only 'recommendations', it is difficult to agree with a view which interprets Chapter VII so restrictively.

With the Soviet representative's return to the Security Council the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution was passed by the General Assembly (GA) on 3 November 1950.³ This asserted that a Security Council impasse did 'not relieve Member States of their obligations . . . to maintain international peace and security'. The General Assembly considered the matter 'with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures'. Naturally with the war already under way the United States was content to act upon any recommendations.

The difficulties in Korea arose not from either the restrictive or permissive interpretation of Chapter VII, nor from the utility or otherwise of the Uniting for Peace Resolution, but from the conduct of the operation and the relationship of that conduct to Chapter VII. Once the Soviet delegation had returned, the Security Council and the Secretary-General ceased to have any real role. Offers of assistance in response to SCR 83 were channelled through the Secretary-General to the US permanent representative in New York who passed them on to Washington. The Secretary-General was merely a conduit, perhaps even an irritant. Even the acceptance of assistance was left in US hands. The United States stipulated a *minimum* contribution of battalion strength, plus supporting artillery and future reinforcements; such limited potential involvement by the smaller nations remains a contentious issue in the current debate on troop contributions.

Although SCR 84 included a request for reports of actions taken by the Unified Command they were just that – reports and statements of events that had already taken place. That the United States assumed almost total control of the operation was hardly surprising. By mid-July the Korean government had placed its troops under US command. Between them the United States and South Korea were contributing 90 per cent of the ground forces, 98 per cent of the air forces and 93 per cent of the naval forces, with the remainder spread among the other 15 contributing nations. The United Nations Unified Command was, in reality, the US Far Eastern Command under General MacArthur and, apart from the Commonwealth Division, all troops were integrated with US forces. In an attempt 'to keep the United Nations in the picture', the Secretary-General tried to form a committee which would 'promote continuing United Nations participation in and supervision of the military security action in Korea'; 'the United States mission promptly turned thumbs down'.⁴

It was understandable that the United States should not wish to be

encumbered by a system of command by committee. The Security Council was no longer involved, and with the return of the Soviet representative it was probably just as well. The General Assembly was at that time voting almost exclusively with the United States, which meant that Assembly resolutions would endorse American wishes, and the Committee of 16 which met weekly was of negligible importance. General MacArthur explained the relationship in fairly blunt terms. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee he stated that the 'Agreement . . . was that the . . . [US] Government should be the agent for the United Nations in the campaign in Korea. The orders that came to me were from the American Government.' MacArthur continued by saying that his 'connection with the United Nations was largely nominal . . . [he] had no direct connection with the United Nations whatsoever'.⁵

The use of the term 'agent' is significant in that it perfectly illustrates the relationship between the United States and the UN. An agent will act for a client but will do so on the briefest of instructions and generally for his own benefit. So it proved with the UN's second great enforcement action, the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. From the beginning of the crisis the United States again assumed the leadership role. As with Korea the United States deployed its forces 'in exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence',⁶ responding to requests from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Only *subsequently* did they report the event to the Security Council. For that very reason Eugene Rostow, among others, has argued that Operation *Desert Storm* was an Article 51 action and could not be considered relevant to Article 42 since the Council did not at any stage exercise control and direction of the policy and mandates which they had adopted.⁷ However, given that SCR 660 specifically invoked Articles 39 and 40 it is a difficult argument to sustain. As with the critiques of the legal justifications of the Korean action, a view such as Rostow's demands a particularly restrictive interpretation of Article 42 in order to deny that Kuwait was *not* a UN enforcement action.

Similarities with Korea are seen in the use of the UN to legitimize US goals and activities. For the Kuwait crisis the device was doubly useful in that it also assuaged a doubting domestic constituency. Again, as with Korea, the completeness of US control effectively circumvented political and military difficulties simply by ignoring the need to consult or interact. As Ambassador Thomas Pickering recognized, for the United States and its allies SCR 678 authorizing 'all necessary means' to secure Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal was 'close to an ideal formulation'. It 'gave a UN licence for the use of force without restriction . . . [an] important military and political consideration in the successful conduct of operations'.⁸ This is, of course, exactly the point made by critics of US

dominance of such events: the United States is effectively unaccountable. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar himself pointed out that the operation was 'made legitimate by the Security Council . . . it was not a UN victory [since that could have resulted only from] hostilities controlled and directed by the UN'.⁹ These points highlight a particular dilemma. Does the fact that an operation is legitimized by the UN simultaneously confer political or moral legitimacy upon that operation? Pickering admitted that it probably did not, noting the complaints by some smaller nations that the UN merely provided a 'cloak' for US national interests.

It seems that when a single power is entrusted with overall 'control' of the military operation the problems concerning interface between the politicians and the military are relatively unimportant. In both Korea and Kuwait the UN's 'agents' were only required to keep the Security Council informed. This situation allowed the framing of SCRs to be very precise since the action to which they referred was often already under way. In the Gulf, for example, the US reported 'that its forces and those of other Governments . . . were intercepting vessels seeking to trade with Iraq . . . the Council on 25 August *endorsed* a naval blockade by adopting [SCR] 665' (emphasis added).¹⁰ The Americans, to a certain degree in consultation with their allies, were *making* policy for the UN.

Interestingly, SCR 665 required Members to co-ordinate their actions using, 'as appropriate', mechanisms of the Council's Military Staff Committee (MSC).¹¹ The instruction was ignored and the MSC was not activated in the Gulf in any meaningful sense. What did happen, however, was yet another debate upon the potential utility of the MSC. Benjamin Rivlin noted that discussion of 'the Military Staff Committee is a euphemism for enforcement action . . . that would be more multilateral in scope and more closely under the direct scrutiny of the Security Council'.¹² It is exactly that, and as such pertinent to this article. The United States and Russia, not surprisingly, hold opposite views in the MSC debate. The US insists that it retains as much control of an operation as possible, it is reluctant to acquiesce to foreign command and it views an active MSC as a potential obstacle to US interests. However, General Colin Powell, in a speech to the American United Nations Association (UNA-USA), stated that the US had 'matured to the point where [it is] confident in placing US forces under the control of a non-US commander'.¹³ By contrast, the oft-leaked Presidential Draft Directive (PDD-13) specifically permits US personnel to question the order of foreign superiors on the grounds of military competence. When asked, in December 1993, why PDD-13 had not been signed more than six months since its first draft, a senior US military spokesman argued that apart from a tiny intellectual/practitioner community there was no constituency for peacekeeping in the United

States.¹⁴ As such there was no urgency to push what would be a controversial directive through the system. The Americans are caught on the horns of a genuine dilemma – a need to influence world affairs, which can be done most economically through the UN, and a desire for autonomy.

It is probably a dilemma that the Russian government shares although its position seems unlikely to be tested at present. Prior to the commencement of Operation *Desert Storm*, the Soviet perspective was that 'pursuant to Article 42 of the UN Charter, the Security Council shall be the sole body competent to take [military] action' and, therefore, logic demanded that first and foremost, the Security Council 'initiate steps to reactivate the Military Staff Committee'.¹⁵ In the early stages of the Gulf crisis the Soviet Foreign Ministry issued a statement critical of US troop deployments arguing that the USSR 'wanted to see the full use of UN mechanisms . . . [and was] prepared to enter into immediate consultations within the framework of the Military Staff Committee'.¹⁶ Interviews in late 1993 indicate that this has remained the Russian position.¹⁷

Since 6 August 1948 when, after over two years' deliberation, the MSC reported back to the Security Council that no resolutions of the various disagreements had been reached, the MSC has been virtually comatose. Miraculous recoveries do occur but the odds are never very good, and that seems to be the case with the MSC.

Between 1945 and 1991 enforcement actions occurred on two specific occasions together with various other Chapter VII resolutions. The Korean and Kuwaiti resolutions were effectively legitimizing mechanisms permitting enforcement activities by individual members or coalitions without providing control of the military aspects through either the Security Council or the MSC. Functionally this separated the military and political apparatus, thus avoiding potential conflict. The lessons of Korea and Kuwait have been taken to be that a separation of policy (UN) and implementation (US) is efficient; that standby or earmarked forces are unnecessary; that an *ad hoc* approach should be the preferred option. The problem with these conclusions is that they are at variance with the ethos and provisions of the Charter. Moreover, they undermine the credibility of the UN, and in the long term may prove counter-productive.

Chapter VII Resolutions and Peacekeeping

Because 'peacekeeping' is not specifically mentioned in the UN Charter it has become a concept, and an activity, susceptible to either generous or restrictive interpretation. As a consequence the title of this section is not as incongruous as it might appear. Peacekeeping operations have in the past turned into peace-enforcement operations and peace-enforcement

operations have made the opposite transformation. In 1960, for example, the initial Congo resolutions were probably under Chapter VI, or Chapter 6½ as Dag Hammarskjöld called it. However, as the crisis developed, SCRs 161 and 169 became far more permissive and were clearly enforcement resolutions.

The Persian Gulf crisis shows movement in the opposite direction. The first resolution, SCR 660, referred to Chapter VII articles. However, after the formal ceasefire, SCR 687 (3 April 91), still referring to Chapter VII, approved the 'immediate deployment of a UN observer unit to monitor the demilitarized zone'. Uniquely SCRs 687-715 dealt with the actual settlement of the dispute in the political sense. They also provided what is argued to be a watershed application of the final sentence of Article 2(7): 'this principle [of non-intervention] shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII'. SCR 688 condemned 'the repression of the Iraqi civilian population [as a threat to] international peace and security in the region'. This might have set a precedent for intervention in internal affairs.

Intervention runs counter to such previously-established peacekeeping principles as consent, impartiality and non-use of force, which were effectively defined with the deployment of UNEF I in 1956. In terms of the military-political interface, UNEF I was another success by avoidance. The essentially passive nature of the operation meant that the force could exist with relatively simple command and control arrangements. Additionally, as it was deployed in an atmosphere of consent, the logistics and administrative support did not need to be immediately responsive. The result was an operation with very little conflict between the forces on the ground and the nominal command centre in New York.

By contrast the operation in the Congo (ONUC) was both complex and bloody. As with Korea the Security Council had become stalemated after the initial resolutions. The Uniting for Peace Resolution was again invoked in order to continue the operation. The Congo provided the first real test of the UN's ability to control its political-military interaction, and the results did not augur well for the future. Nearly 20,000 troops from more than 15 contributing nations were eventually engaged in the Congo and problems which were absent in the relatively benign environment of the Suez, quickly manifested themselves. The command structure itself was dominated by civilians, but even that seemed to have occurred by accident. Upon arrival in theatre a British General, Alexander, who was in command of Ghana's contingent, announced that he would be the UN Force Commander in the absence of any other formal structure. Hammarskjöld responded by placing Ralph Bunche in overall command. Bunche immediately initiated a series of troop deployments which

ignored basic military conditions such as adequate communication links. This led the first actual Force Commander, Major-General C. von Horn, to clash with the political leadership on a number of occasions, objecting that certain decisions were not militarily feasible. He threatened to resign at least three times and also actually refused to implement a direct order from Bunche.¹⁸

The problems were not, however, limited to disputes between the civilians and the military. On one occasion Conor Cruise O'Brien, the UN's leading civilian officer in Katanga, ordered Operation *Morthor*, a round-up of non-Congolese forces. It ended in a bloody eight-day battle in which UN troops were outnumbered and outgunned. It is argued that O'Brien made the decision without reference to the Secretary-General or the civilian or the military leadership of ONUC. This is, of course, denied by O'Brien.¹⁹ In a 1993 interview, F.T. Liu, who was deeply involved in ONUC, probably painted the most accurate picture. Liu said that O'Brien had contended that 'he used force on the orders of the Secretary General. The [Secretary-General] said he never gave such an order. What probably happened was that both were right – it was probably engineered by someone in Leopoldville.'²⁰

What the Congo demonstrated was the almost limitless potential for conflict between civilian and military personnel. In the field there is *daily* pressure which can make long-term political needs seem irrelevant whereas in New York the reverse is true. The sheer geographical scale of operating in a country such as the Congo places intolerable demands on a multinational logistics chain, although a part of that problem was avoided in the Congo by 'sub-contracting' the logistical lift problems to the United States which still had a structure in place after supplying UNEF. A further complication was the lack of control over the contributing units. For example, the UN only learned of the withdrawal of Egyptian troops as it happened,²¹ and the major contributor, India, had to withdraw its brigade in March 1963 to assist in the border war with China. Before its withdrawal, however, the Indians had provided more evidence that single nation command and control was the most efficient. India gave ONUC the bulk of its troops and also provided military commanders and an existing brigade structure. What successes there were in the Congo could arguably be attributed to that fact.

The Congo experience damaged the UN and peacekeeping. During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a lull in activity until UNEF II in 1973. UNEF II is significant because an expansion of the definition of 'self-defence' developed. Hitherto, self-defence had referred only to returning fire if *personally* attacked. UNEF II stretched this to include defence of the mandate. A peacekeeper could, for example, return fire if

UN installations were attacked or patrols were threatened. This broader guideline was interpreted in a variety of ways. The Nordic contingents effectively ignored it and continued the principle of personal self-defence whereas the French met almost any impediment to the execution of the mandate with counter-force. Such inconsistency naturally presented problems for the UN with host nations as well as with world opinion. In the Lebanon in 1986, for example, a French soldier shot and killed a local leader at a checkpoint. The resultant clashes left eight UNIFIL troops dead and over 40 wounded. The soldier was said to have been under national standard operating procedures (SOPs) and not UNIFIL's.²² The French battalion was withdrawn.

Although there were difficulties with precise enforcement actions such as Korea and Kuwait they appear to be almost insignificant when compared with those encountered in 'messier' internal conflicts such as the Congo. Two recent operations which seem to bear testimony to this are those in Bosnia and Somalia. Both were authorized under Chapter VII and both have encountered considerable problems. In the former Yugoslavia, SCR 743 (21 February 92) initiated the formation of UNPROFOR (the UN Protection Force). However, it was an extension of Chapter VII resolutions which established embargoes (for example, SCR 713). From the outset this operation was doomed to be of the 'messier' variety. Major-General Mackenzie, who was the commander of the Sarajevo sector, has even argued that the name itself, 'Protection Force', led civilians to expect protection for themselves and not simply the UNHCR aid workers and convoys.²³ Nevertheless the name was probably the least of UNPROFOR's worries. Various SCRs such as 770, which mandated the facilitation of aid delivery to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia, and SCR 786, which authorized 'no-fly zones', have produced ambiguous results. Both success and failure are claimed: success in saving thousands who might otherwise have died and failure in creating the conditions for peace.

The problems of the political-military interface have been those that are coming to be seen as standard in UN operations. There have been, for example, charges of corruption and conduct which is unbecoming to UN personnel who will inevitably, if perhaps unreasonably, be judged by higher standards. In 1993, 19 Ukrainians and four Kenyans were repatriated on disciplinary grounds and the local perception was that they represented the tip of an iceberg. The UN convened a Special Commission of Inquiry which 'found no evidence to confirm claims of widespread or systematic illegal activity' according to the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Yasushi Akashi.²⁴

There have also been confrontations between UN HQ and officers in

theatre. The French general, Jean Cot, attempted to go directly to the Security Council over the Secretary-General's head in the row over who had the authority to order airstrikes to protect UN troops. Just as serious, was an incident reported in *Newsweek* (7 February 1994) which alleged that Lt.-Gen. Briquemont had complained that he had ordered the Nordic battalion into Srebrenica to relieve Canadian troops but that the Swedish battalion commander had ignored the order on the instructions of the Swedish Defence Minister. No further action was taken and by late January Briquemont had quit.

The other oft-expressed complaint is a feeling of impotence. For example, even allowing for NATO's ultimatum of 9 February 1994, divisions within the organization still exist on the issue of active enforcement. The contradiction between the political acceptability of airstrikes – clean, quick, limited casualties – and their relatively limited military effectiveness will not go away. Despite these concerns there have also been perceived successes. Both Maj.-Gen. Mackenzie and Colonel Bob Stewart, the first commander of UNPROFOR's British contingent, refer to the UN's success in Bosnia. Col. Stewart said that he was 'proud to have served with the United Nations in Bosnia'.²⁵ He was unconcerned about the mandate he received which he believed was sufficiently open to interpretation to allow him to do a worthwhile job. Similarly, Gen. Mackenzie said that 'people are always asking me if I was frustrated in Sarajevo . . . but under the terms of the UN mandate we were given we achieved our objectives'.²⁶ He was not so kind, however, towards the UN's command, control and logistics structures. He argued that: 'at the very least the UN needs to acquire its own communications equipment and develop its own standard operating procedures (SOPs)'.²⁷ NATO has exercised its interoperability for years and even prior to the Gulf War there had been a six-month lead-in period, but the composition of modern UN operations has meant that up to 30 different national contingents might actually meet on site for the first time. Mackenzie's solution involves 'setting up a functional military headquarters co-located with the UN in New York',²⁸ a solution which could be interpreted as not only reviving but actually enlarging the influence of the Military Staff Committee (MSC).

If the UN operation in Bosnia was slowly engulfed in a quagmire then the terrain in Somalia must have consisted of quicksand. The problems, and the reactions to them, came thick and fast. The original UNOSOM was authorized by SCR 751, as a continuation of Chapter VII SCR 733 and consisted only of about 500 observers and security forces with a mandate to assist with humanitarian assistance. UNOSOM completed that task fairly effectively. However, very quickly attacks began on UN personnel and as a result the UN authorized a Unified Task Force

(UNITAF) under US command (SCR 794) to 'establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations'. UNITAF consisted of 30,000 US troops who were *not* blue-helmeted, probably to the Secretary-General's chagrin. Its job was to underpin the delivery of humanitarian aid, though political responsibilities remained with UNOSOM. UNITAF, having carried out its limited brief was superseded by UNOSOM II in March 1993 (SCR 814) and mandated to establish the security environment necessary for providing humanitarian assistance and also to disarm and reconcile the paramilitary factions.

The scale of this task soon became evident. The Somalian experience highlights the speed with which problems can turn into disasters – both political and military. On the political front, the case of the Italian General Bruno Loi is illustrative. In June 1993 the Italian Defence Minister, Fabio Fabbri, complained that the UN was overstepping its authority with the use of force. Subsequently Gen. Loi publicly rebuked the UN for changing its role from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. New York demanded his recall which the Italian government refused. The whole episode reflected extremely badly on the UN but it was indicative of a variety of similar problems. The arguments had developed after the US gunship attacks which had killed so many civilians. After the attack, France, the UAE and Saudi Arabia resisted participation in coercive actions.

On the military side reports of *non*-interoperability are numerous but not completely conclusive. On 3 October 1993, 12 US Rangers were killed in a military débâcle. A mission was mounted which involved arresting attendees at a meeting of General Aideed's followers. Early in the operation a Black Hawk helicopter, carrying a US raiding party, was brought down. Rangers rushed to the crash site to protect the survivors. They were quickly surrounded, called for assistance, which took time to arrive, and in the ensuing exchange of fire sustained heavy casualties. The recriminations included an accusation that intense pressure was required to get Malaysian and Pakistani troops to deploy into action. According to Major David Stockwell, a UN spokesman in Mogadishu, this was simply untrue: 'I will grant you that in this international UN military we do not have the same command and control; the unity of command is a lot looser, so sometimes it takes some persuading [but] the Malaysians performed magnificently.'²⁹ The real difficulty is that comments such as Major Stockwell's, as expressed in October 1993, are often overshadowed by prejudice. In December 1993 an item in the *Washington Post* under the headline 'US Troops Study Lessons Learned in Somalia Mission', stated that: 'The excruciating difficulty in getting Malaysian soldiers to turn right instead of left during one October firefight has come to symbolize the obstacles to a genuine integration of armies'.³⁰ Compounding this view

a high-ranking US officer reportedly said: 'After seeing what I've seen here, I would never want to see American forces under foreign command, ever, under any circumstances.'³¹

All national military contingents tend to view other nations' contributions as inadequate and often incompetent. Unfortunately such views have political repercussions. One consequence in Somalia was that whilst the Turkish General Cevik Bir nominally commanded all UN troops, US General Montgomery retained direct control over US forces. Such a force within a force cannot be conducive to either military or political unity.

In early February 1994 the Security Council revised the Somalia mandate, most notably withdrawing the authorization to forcibly disarm the Somali factions. The Council had thus retreated from three years' of attempting coercion. It may eventually be forced to do the same in Bosnia. As US troops began withdrawing from Somalia in late December 1993, the chief American representative in Mogadishu, Robert B. Oakley, offered four lessons that he had drawn from the experience.³² First, there should be a clear, achievable objective. Second, requisite resources should be immediately available. Third, know how long it will take and what it will cost. Fourth, insist on Congressional support. These lessons can best be summed up as 'only play when you know you cannot lose'. Although this view may explain why the United States resisted sending ground forces to Bosnia, it cannot be the philosophy of the UN. The UN cannot, and should not, pick and choose the injustices to which it will respond.

Challenges Ahead

In the debate surrounding the future of the UN, certain politico-military issues consistently arise. A particularly contentious and contemporary issue surrounds the UN's command and control structure. At best it is perceived as inefficient, at worst counter-productive.

Under the broad heading of command and control various aspects need to be addressed separately. *Dual reporting*, for example, is an obvious and perhaps ultimately unavoidable area of conflict. Currently it is inconceivable that national contingents would *not* refer to national headquarters for confirmation of instructions which might commit them to any life-threatening activity. Nevertheless, it should be the goal of all UN operations to have a single point of reference in theatre. That point of reference must be the Secretary-General's Special Representative who should be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. The choice of a retired US Navy Admiral, Jonathon Howe, for Somalia appeared to have merit. He was American, and the United States had contributed all of UNITAF and

(UNITAF) under US command (SCR 794) to 'establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations'. UNITAF consisted of 30,000 US troops who were *not* blue-helmeted, probably to the Secretary-General's chagrin. Its job was to underpin the delivery of humanitarian aid, though political responsibilities remained with UNOSOM. UNITAF, having carried out its limited brief was superseded by UNOSOM II in March 1993 (SCR 814) and mandated to establish the security environment necessary for providing humanitarian assistance and also to disarm and reconcile the paramilitary factions.

The scale of this task soon became evident. The Somali experience highlights the speed with which problems can turn into disasters – both political and military. On the political front, the case of the Italian General Bruno Loi is illustrative. In June 1993 the Italian Defence Minister, Fabio Fabbri, complained that the UN was overstepping its authority with the use of force. Subsequently Gen. Loi publicly rebuked the UN for changing its role from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. New York demanded his recall which the Italian government refused. The whole episode reflected extremely badly on the UN but it was indicative of a variety of similar problems. The arguments had developed after the US gunship attacks which had killed so many civilians. After the attack, France, the UAE and Saudi Arabia resisted participation in coercive actions.

On the military side reports of *non*-interoperability are numerous but not completely conclusive. On 3 October 1993, 12 US Rangers were killed in a military *débâcle*. A mission was mounted which involved arresting attendees at a meeting of General Aideed's followers. Early in the operation a Black Hawk helicopter, carrying a US raiding party, was brought down. Rangers rushed to the crash site to protect the survivors. They were quickly surrounded, called for assistance, which took time to arrive, and in the ensuing exchange of fire sustained heavy casualties. The recriminations included an accusation that intense pressure was required to get Malaysian and Pakistani troops to deploy into action. According to Major David Stockwell, a UN spokesman in Mogadishu, this was simply untrue: 'I will grant you that in this international UN military we do not have the same command and control; the unity of command is a lot looser, so sometimes it takes some persuading [but] the Malaysians performed magnificently.'²⁹ The real difficulty is that comments such as Major Stockwell's, as expressed in October 1993, are often overshadowed by prejudice. In December 1993 an item in the *Washington Post* under the headline 'US Troops Study Lessons Learned in Somalia Mission', stated that: 'The excruciating difficulty in getting Malaysian soldiers to turn right instead of left during one October firefight has come to symbolize the obstacles to a genuine integration of armies'.³⁰ Compounding this view

a high-ranking US officer reportedly said: 'After seeing what I've seen here, I would never want to see American forces under foreign command, ever, under any circumstances.'³¹

All national military contingents tend to view other nations' contributions as inadequate and often incompetent. Unfortunately such views have political repercussions. One consequence in Somalia was that whilst the Turkish General Cevik Bir nominally commanded all UN troops, US General Montgomery retained direct control over US forces. Such a force within a force cannot be conducive to either military or political unity.

In early February 1994 the Security Council revised the Somalia mandate, most notably withdrawing the authorization to forcibly disarm the Somali factions. The Council had thus retreated from three years' of attempting coercion. It may eventually be forced to do the same in Bosnia. As US troops began withdrawing from Somalia in late December 1993, the chief American representative in Mogadishu, Robert B. Oakley, offered four lessons that he had drawn from the experience.³² First, there should be a clear, achievable objective. Second, requisite resources should be immediately available. Third, know how long it will take and what it will cost. Fourth, insist on Congressional support. These lessons can best be summed up as 'only play when you know you cannot lose'. Although this view may explain why the United States resisted sending ground forces to Bosnia, it cannot be the philosophy of the UN. The UN cannot, and should not, pick and choose the injustices to which it will respond.

Challenges Ahead

In the debate surrounding the future of the UN, certain politico-military issues consistently arise. A particularly contentious and contemporary issue surrounds the UN's command and control structure. At best it is perceived as inefficient, at worst counter-productive.

Under the broad heading of command and control various aspects need to be addressed separately. *Dual reporting*, for example, is an obvious and perhaps ultimately unavoidable area of conflict. Currently it is inconceivable that national contingents would *not* refer to national headquarters for confirmation of instructions which might commit them to any life-threatening activity. Nevertheless, it should be the goal of all UN operations to have a single point of reference in theatre. That point of reference must be the Secretary-General's Special Representative who should be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. The choice of a retired US Navy Admiral, Jonathon Howe, for Somalia appeared to have merit. He was American, and the United States had contributed all of UNITAF and

most of UNOSOM II. Unfortunately, he was perceived as an 'agent' of the United States and this undermined his legitimacy with other contributors and the belligerents. He was also considered to have personalized the operation by pursuing General Aideed. Whether or not they were accurate, these perceptions crucially damaged the image of the UN, as did reports of US Rangers taking instruction not from Howe, not from New York, and perhaps not even from US Central Command (CENTCOM) in Tampa, Florida, but from their own individual bases in the United States.³³

Dual reporting is not the only area of tension in the chain of command, there is also friction between officers and personnel of different nationalities. In Cambodia, for example, there were reports, possibly apocryphal, of a Dutch mine-clearing team refusing to obey the orders of a superior officer from another contingent. At a higher level the French second-in-command was sacked by the Australian Force Commander less than nine months after taking post. Whilst it has been argued that the problem between General Michel Loridon and General John Sanderson was located in a personality clash, it may also be indicative of a divergence between the French and the Australian approaches to UN operations. An unnamed Australian officer said that Loridon was 'not the soldier-diplomat we needed'.³⁴ Such views meant that Loridon, in his own words, left Cambodia 'frustrated by [his] inability to implement the UN mandate'.³⁵ The difference between the two men and their respective nations goes to the heart of the debate concerning the UN's role and methodology – proactive or reactive. It is a dilemma that will not be resolved until national pride is disentangled from the overriding necessity for a responsive command structure capable of liaising with New York, the hosts, the belligerents, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and any other interested parties. In a world of sovereign states that may be wishful thinking.

The same impetus needed to avoid dual reporting would also be required to develop cohesion in other spheres. Lack of *interoperability*, for example, has often been cited as a severe obstacle to successful operations. Modern technological advances and 'off-the-peg' military equipment and systems may partially overcome some of the problems but standardizing SOPs is far more difficult. However, this *can* be overcome in specialist disciplines by using single nation contingents to provide force-wide support. With UNTAC, for example, communications were the province of the Australians, engineering the New Zealanders and airlift the French. There is also no reason why a complete field HQ could not be provided by one nation with a Force Commander of another nationality. Interoperability is not impossible given political will and direction.

One previously neglected area which is currently receiving at least limited attention is *training*. At a UN-sponsored workshop in January 1994, hosted by the Austrian Armed Forces, a great deal of progress was made in developing a module for use in the curricula of national staff colleges.³⁶ The purpose of the module is to 'familiarise staff college students (military and civilian) with the planning, preparation, and execution of peacekeeping operations so that they are better able to perform duties as: staff officers at Force HQs; and commanders and senior staff officers at national contingents'.³⁷ There are also centres for multinational training either proposed or operational in Argentina, Australia, Austria and the Scandinavian countries. However, what these various centres and initiatives need most urgently is an increase in status. As with most organizations, in times of financial difficulty training is an early casualty, but it is central for an improvement in understanding, and consequently trust, between coalition partners. To imagine that personnel can be simply dropped into a strange environment and deal with a complex politico-military situation without training is perverse.

Assuming that the personnel have interoperable equipment, have been well-trained and will be reporting to a single reference point, there is still a requirement for an extremely controversial commodity – *intelligence*. The concerns of the smaller nations that the UN would be a cover for great power 'spying' are very strong. However, without some sort of information gathering, collation and analysis mechanism the UN is too often left blind. This is particularly true of 'early warning' facilities. Since the demise of ORCI (Office for Research and the Collection of Information) there has been very little systematic collection of data and consequently not much policy planning. The formation of a Policy and Analysis Unit is a step in the right direction but at present it consists of only one officer. The responsibilities of ORCI were passed to already overstretched regional desk officers and consequently most of the 'early warning' that takes place is merely monitoring the media. In his report of June 1992, 'An Agenda for Peace', the Secretary-General promised 'to develop and present a plan for an adequate early warning mechanism before the start of the 48th session of the General Assembly'. No plan has yet been published.

However, a new 24-hour Situation Centre has become operational. Staffed mostly by military personnel, it is neither quite an operations room nor an information centre but something between the two. It is the first point of contact for field operatives and receives daily briefs from all operations. It also handles any relevant data from other UN agencies and NGOs. At present the Situation Centre and the Policy and Analysis Unit are not co-located and neither is situated in the Secretariat building. Both

appear to have been half-hearted responses to weaknesses pinpointed from outside the organization. Both need to be substantially strengthened if they are in any way to promote greater efficiency in UN operations.

Improvements in the areas discussed above would require the formulation of a consistent and agreed *doctrine*. The lack of such an instrument encourages the *ad hoc* approach. Developing a doctrine and refining it over time is an element in the retention of corporate knowledge, the absence of which is a common cause of complaint within the UN. Some efforts are being made by the United States, the Scandinavians and the UK to create a doctrine but they remain in their infancy.

The creation of such a doctrine needs to evolve from an agreed philosophical thrust. Perhaps the major problem for the UN practitioners in the field is that there is no real congruence between theory and practice, between idealism and realism. In October 1993, Kofi Annan argued that:

When lightly-armed peacekeepers were made to look helpless in Somalia and Bosnia, member states and public opinion supported more muscular action; an increasing number of situations seem to require it, and the Charter of the United Nations provides the legal authority for it . . . [however], at the same moment that the world has galvanized itself behind collective action in principle, it has failed to take commensurate steps in practice.³⁸

In February–March 1994, threats of airstrikes were once again ‘fashionable’. However, even as these threats were made, caveats were placed upon them. John Major spoke of them as being only tactically ‘available’ and played down the likelihood of their use. The United States advocated airstrikes but was reluctant to commit ground troops. It is difficult to find anyone prepared to argue that airstrikes alone can be of genuine military utility. The problem seems to be that the West’s rhetoric inexorably leads it towards decisions which are actioned at the wrong time for the wrong reasons and probably with the wrong results. And it is not too fanciful to suggest that decisions are, to a large degree, due to media-induced pressure, what a *Newsweek* article called ‘the don’t-just-stand-there pressure’.³⁹

This pressure should not be underestimated because it is an important element of the tension between desire and reality that debilitates the organization. An example of this conflict can be seen with the Secretary-General’s advocacy, in ‘An Agenda for Peace’ of a ‘reserve fund to meet initial expenses of [peacekeeping] operations’ (para 70(d)). Although his suggestion was accepted and the fund opened it was very quickly emptied in order to finance ongoing operations and not for its intended purpose. The response of the German Ambassador to the UN, Detlev Graf zu

Rantzau, was common. He said that while 'Germany supports the principle of the fund, like everybody else we have no money'.⁴⁰ The ideal had apparently confronted reality; although when the political will is present the finance inevitably follows.

The same is true in another important sphere, that of standing forces and variants of the idea. In 'An Agenda for Peace' the Secretary-General argued that the military option 'is essential to the credibility of the United Nations as a guarantor of international security' (para 43). He added that Member States should make the forces necessary to take such action available 'on a permanent basis' (para 43). The Secretary-General has retreated from the 'permanent' suggestion because he could find no enthusiasm for the idea among the P5,⁴¹ probably because the whole idea had too much connection with the discredited notion of a revived MSC.

While standing forces have attracted little support the idea of earmarked, or stand-by, forces has been slightly more favourably received. Since 1993 Colonel Gambiez of France has led a newly created Standby Elements Planning Team which has been responsible for canvassing the Member States for pledges of personnel and/or services. They were not asking for a blank cheque but more realistically for what Colonel Gambiez refers to as a 'travellers cheque approach'.⁴² By this he meant that states would initially agree to provide certain personnel and/or services upon call. When asked for, the governments would then counter-sign. If, for any reason, they felt unable to contribute, there would be no pressure to do so. The standby elements would only be used in urgent cases. Otherwise, normal procedures would apply for peacekeeping operations. Formal responses have been disappointing. But informally responses have been more encouraging with up to 14 battalions promised by 40 states, though most members appear to be waiting for a lead from the P5 – which has so far been unforthcoming. The problem with stand-by forces is that the name alone carries with it the stigma of standing forces which are anathema to most members. Basically the arguments are those which are also paraded against a revived MSC – the P5 are against it because it would dilute their power, the rest of the world are against it because it would enhance P5 power. It would appear that in a world of sovereign states a supranational force is perceived as a threat to everyone. As one senior military adviser has argued, 'the term "standby" is a semantic trip-wire virtually guaranteed to elicit a negative reaction'.⁴³

The same reticence is evident concerning suggestions for a rapid deployment force. In the heady days of the summer of 1992 presidential candidate Bill Clinton argued that one proposal 'worth exploring calls for a Rapid Deployment Force that could be used for purposes beyond traditional peacekeeping'.⁴⁴ However, since becoming President there has

been precious little progress on this issue in spite of the highly successful small-scale, early deployment of US personnel to Macedonia. It is generally agreed that an early response to specific problems can avert a descent into crisis. The difficulty arises from the need to garner support within the Security Council quickly enough to initiate speedy action. A further risk is that smaller nations might see a predilection for preventive deployment as a threat to their sovereignty – the force in Macedonia was deployed by request and, therefore, avoided such accusations. Early intervention might be another casualty of realism.

More fundamental, however, are the problems which surround the formation of a military command structure. In their forthcoming article, Whitman and Bartholomew discuss this in considerable and informative detail.⁴⁵ Their suggestion of a Military Committee (MC) roughly approximates to the MSC although they deflect criticism of P5 dominance by involving all members of the Security Council. The problem with this solution is that many commentators believe it would be unwieldy. Robert Grey, for example, anticipating an enlarged Council said: 'can you imagine a P7 or a P9, that is to say 7 or 9 Joint Chiefs of Staff, it just wouldn't work'.⁴⁶ He believed that seven or nine could not be successful and, therefore, 15, 17 or 19 would be ridiculously cumbersome. Suggestions that the UN simply co-opt the NATO model fail to account for the antipathy towards a superpower-dominated structure. Notwithstanding the criticisms of suggested new structures, there is at least a *prima facie* case for an improved structure since that provided by the Charter is not being utilized. What that structure will be is almost impossible to say but it does seem that a consensus has formed behind the notion of an increased role for military representatives in the policy making process.

Suggestions for meeting the challenges ahead are plentiful but none are acceptable to all parties, and none seem likely to be in the near future. In September 1993 President Clinton told the General Assembly that the United States supported 'the creation of a genuine UN 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 with a modern operations centre with global communications'.⁴⁷ Those ideals have been baulked by political realities. A Situation Centre has emerged but only in a few poorly-equipped and poorly-staffed offices. The grandiose ideas contained in Clinton's vision still appear unlikely to be realized.

Conclusion

The problems of the political-military interface that confront the UN are not unique. The difficulties of command and control, dual reporting,

interoperability, training, intelligence and common doctrine are faced by states and any large multinational organization. The diffuse and loosely-defined goals of the UN significantly exacerbate these problems. Nowhere was this more clearly illustrated than in the diverse responses of Iraq and the P5 to the limited use of force endorsed by SCR 665 (naval blockade of Iraq). Iraq argued that the resolution 'undermined the Council's authority, there being no real limits or boundaries ensuring the proper use of force on the high seas'.⁴⁸ Conversely the United States believed the decision to be 'historic and significant' and that the 'text applied strictly to efforts to ensure that the sanctions were not violated'.⁴⁹ France showed some sympathy for Iraq's concerns by stating that the resolution 'must not be understood as blanket authorization for the indiscriminate use of force'.⁵⁰ France also believed that any use of coercion would require notification of the Council. The Soviet Union insisted that political and diplomatic methods 'should be employed to the maximum degree possible',⁵¹ similar to the subsequent Russian view on Bosnia. Britain agreed with the United States. China said that it was, 'in principle, against military involvement by big Powers and was not in favour of using force in the name of the UN'.⁵² Thus the full spectrum of views was covered by the P5 and the major belligerent; the same is true of most conflict situations. Such fundamental disagreement defies efforts to develop guiding principles.

There is also confusion within nations. The UK Minister of Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, responded to the mortar bombing of Sarajevo's main market in February 1994, with the argument that if 'there are any initiatives of a military kind that the military are able to recommend as being relevant, then clearly that is something we would have to listen to very carefully'.⁵³ This statement typifies the dilemma of a politician asking the military to provide suitable suggestions for action. It could be seen as either subordination to military advice or, in the event of unwelcome consequences, permitting blame to be deflected from politicians to the military.

The lack of a common purpose within the international community has led to an emphasis on national criteria when contemplating the use of force. Addressing the General Assembly on 27 September 1993 President Clinton proposed four criteria for determining whether the UN should start new missions; is there a real threat to peace, are there clear objectives, can an end-point be identified, what will it cost?⁵⁴

These criteria reflect a climate of caution generated by the apparent intractability of Bosnia and Somalia. The particular sensitivity of the United States to casualties is easily manipulated – indeed General Aidedd targeted US troops for that very reason. The escalation of the Somalian operation from a small Pakistani contingent to a massive US force and

back to a smaller UN operation limited to 'monitoring voluntary disarmament',⁵⁵ was partly a response to American deaths and partly a legacy of a lack of foresight.

Ambassador Jesus of Cape Verde, recently President of the Security Council, has suggested that Somalia was not a disaster caused by unavoidable military problems but the result of avoidable political mistakes made because decision makers ignored previous lessons of UN involvement. 'Disarmament', he argued, 'can never be a *military* option, it must be a voluntary affair', a view now generally accepted. The Ambassador also pointed out that 'if you want to make peace you must make it *between* those at war; you cannot impose it upon them', a lesson being learned in Bosnia. And finally he argued that the political 'must always be the predominant element in any mandate'.⁵⁶

Whitman and Bartholomew also make pragmatic assumptions about the future military management of peace support operations, in order to make suggestions that can satisfy the need they perceive for 'an effective politico-military structure within the United Nations headquarters, operating at the military strategic level'.⁵⁷ Their observations are extremely persuasive but ultimately deal with the symptoms not the disease within the United Nations organization. The issue of reactivating the MSC is a good example of this. Analysts rightly focus on the practical advantages of utilizing the committee for pre-policy advice or strategic direction but this sop ignores the political reality that the MSC is dead because of the negative connotations it revives and the threat it poses to the sanctity of sovereignty. Reformation of the UN will continue to be piece-meal as long as radical alternatives are so easily dismissed.

President Clinton said that the United Nations could not engage in all of the world's conflicts: 'the United Nations must know when to say no'.⁵⁸ The UN will return to its previous impotence if it *does* learn to say no. It should answer all calls for help without prejudice. However, it can only do so when there is a subordination of sovereignty to a supranational organization. The United Nations must not be put in the position where it has to say no despite its obligations to say yes. Clinton also said that we live at a turning point in human history. Turning points either provide, or require, radical alternatives and very few of the contemporary suggestions for remodelling the United Nations contain radical ideas. As Sir Brian Urquhart has noted,

the problem is a lack of vision, the opportunity is to provide that vision – the challenge is to promote the view that can see pragmatic idealism prevail over rather stale realism . . . [which] is often a

euphemism for short-sightedness, self-interest and policies lacking in the necessary courage or vision.⁵⁹

The UN is currently no more than the sum of the narrowly defined interests of member states, and the political–military interface reflects as much. If steps are not taken to adopt a genuinely global ethos which places peoples' rights above states' rights then the UN will remain all that its critics claim it to be.

NOTES

1. Interview, 30 Nov. 93 at the United Nations (New York).
2. See, D. W. Bowett, *United Nations Forces: A Legal Study of United Nations Practice*, London: Stevens & Sons, 1964; H. Kelsen, *The Law of the United Nations*, New York: Holt, Reinhard & Winston, 1950.
3. GA Res. 337 A, B & C (V).
4. Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations*, London: Macmillan, 1954, p. 334.
5. Quoted in Bowett (see note 2 above) p. 42.
6. *UN Chronicle*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Dec. 90, p. 6.
7. E. V. Rostow, 'United What? Enforcement Action of Collective Self-Defence', *American Journal of International Law* (85), 506, 1991.
8. Thomas R. Pickering, 'The UN Contribution to Future International Security', transcript of personal remarks made at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 20 Nov. 1991, p. 10.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *UN Chronicle* (see note 10 above), pp. 6–7.
11. For an excellent study of the history of the MSC see J. Boulden, 'Prometheus Unborn: The History of the Military Staff Committee', *Aurora Papers 19*, Canadian Centre for Global Security, Aug. 1993.
12. Benjamin Rivlin, 'The Rediscovery of the UN Military Staff Committee', The Ralph Bunche Institute on the United Nations, *Occasional Paper Series, No. IV*, May 1991, p. 9.
13. Remarks by General Colin L. Powell to the United Nations Association of the USA, 21 April 1993, New York.
14. Anonymity requested.
15. D. Cox, 'The Use of Force by the Security Council for Enforcement and Deterrent Purposes: A Conference Report', Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament (Conference held Dec. 1990), p. 51.
16. *The Financial Times*, 15 Aug. 1990.
17. Interview with Colonel Belyayev, Military Adviser, Russian Embassy, Washington, DC, 7 Dec. 1993.
18. See C. von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, New York: David McKay Co., 1967, for a detailed explanation of these events.
19. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back*, New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1966.
20. Interview, 30 Nov. 93, International Peace Academy, New York.
21. *Ibid.*
22. G. Hagglund, 'Peacekeeping in a Modern War Zone', *Survival*, May/June 1993, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 236–7.
23. Cited in P. Saracino, 'Polemics and Prescriptions: Interview with a Peacekeeper General', *International Defense Review*, 5, 1993, p. 370.
24. United Nations Information Centre News Summary, NS/3/94, 3, Feb. 1994.
25. *The Officer*, Jan./Feb. 1994, p. 12.