

The End of the Cold War:
Peacekeeping's New Dawn

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Introduction

It is a great honour to be invited to give a Keynote Speech at this prestigious conference. It is a special honour – and pleasure – to share this platform with Dr Sadako Ogata. She was an outstanding colleague and friend when she was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and I was the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping during the post-Cold War years. We have seen each other only rarely since those days but last year she did me a great honour by accepting an honorary fellowship at St Antony's College, the college which I head at Oxford University.

I pay tribute to all those who have worked so hard to organize this excellent conference and especially to Dr Asahiko Hanzawa, a recent graduate of St Antony's and a loyal friend of the College.

The United Nations and International Peace and Security: the Use of Force

The primary purpose assigned to the United Nations by its Charter is the maintenance of international peace and security. The Charter requires the Member States of the United Nations to settle their disputes by peaceful means. Force may be used unilaterally only in self-defence 'if an armed attack occurs against it', a clause which clearly indicates that the pre-emptive use of force is not permitted. Moreover, the authority to use force unilaterally lasts only 'until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security'. Any use of force, other than in self-defence, has to be authorized by the Security Council. Sadly, these Charter provisions have been violated by many Member States, including the most powerful ones and those which most vociferously demand respect for international law.

The founders of the United Nations were mindful of the League of Nations' inability to deal with acts of aggression, notably the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and decided that the new international organization should 'have teeth'. The Security Council was accordingly given the authority to use force itself in response to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. The Member States were invited to enter into binding agreements with the Council under which they would provide, at the Council's request, the troops and other military assets that it would require for such operations.

No such agreement has ever been signed. Hostility between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies made it impossible to implement the relevant provisions of the

Charter. Instead, in 1950, the Council authorized a United States-led multinational coalition to use force against North Korea's invasion of South Korea. This decision was possible only because the Soviet Union was boycotting the Council at the time.

Peacekeeping during the Cold War

As the Cold War took hold of the world, it became more and more difficult for the Security Council to agree on collective action to settle conflicts. This was because in most conflicts the East supported one party and the West supported the other.

In this increasingly arid desert, there nevertheless flowered a lesser form of military action to help prevent and resolve conflict. It was called peacekeeping and was primarily used in the context of conflicts created by inefficient decolonization, usually inefficient decolonization by my own country – in Palestine, Kashmir, Egypt, Cyprus – but also by other European colonial powers in the Belgian Congo and the Dutch East Indies.

The determining characteristics of a peacekeeping operation are five:

- It is composed of military personnel, and often police as well, who are made available to the United Nations by their governments, and of civilians, who are provided by the Secretary-General;
- It is established by the Security Council under the day-to-day command of the Secretary-General who reports regularly to the Council;
- It is deployed with the consent of the parties to the conflict and is required to be neutral and impartial between them;
- If it is armed, it is authorized to use its arms only in self-defence;
- Its costs are apportioned amongst all the member states of the UN.

Thirteen peacekeeping operations were established by the United Nations in the thirty years from 1948 to 1978. All but two of them were what are now called traditional peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations in those days were interim measures whose purpose was to help create conditions in which peacemakers could help the parties negotiate a peaceful settlement of their conflict. To this end they monitored cease-fires, controlled buffer zones, verified compliance with interim agreements between the parties, defused situations which threatened to re-ignite the conflict and so on. A classic and successful operation of this kind is UNDOF on the Golan Heights in Syria, which has been there for almost 30 years and now includes a Japanese contingent.

The UN operation in the Congo, ONUC, which was established in 1960 began as a traditional operation but soon became what is now known as a complex emergency operation. The newly independent authorities in the Congo did not have the capacity to control secessionist warlords, resentful settlers and European mercenaries. Law and order broke down and the UN force soon found that there was no peace to keep and that it did not enjoy the consent of the parties to the several conflicts which broke out in that very large country. As a result, the UN force was eventually authorized to use force, especially to prevent Katanga from seceding from the newly independent state.

This was the first time that UN peacekeepers were deployed into an internal conflict within a state. Technically that was a departure from the Charter's definition of the

UN's purpose as being to maintain international peace and security. But it gave the United Nations a first taste of the problems it would face when the Cold War ended and most of the conflicts in the world would be internal ones.

The other non-traditional operation during the Cold War was a small and brief one which was deployed in the mid-1960s in West Irian, the western part of the island of New Guinea. It was what is now called a multifunctional peacekeeping operation and had the task of helping Indonesia and the Netherlands to implement an agreement that that territory should cease to be a Dutch colony and should become part of Indonesia. Its principal tasks were to maintain internal security and to protect a temporary United Nations administration.

Peacekeeping after the end of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War in 1988-9 led to a very rapid growth in peacekeeping activity. In the 43 years of the Cold War, 13 operations had been deployed - on average one every 40 months. The next 13 were deployed in only four years - on average one every four months. Now, fourteen years after the end of the Cold War, the total of UN peacekeeping operations has risen to 56.

Why has this happened? There are three main reasons.

First, the end of East-West rivalry and the emergence of what the then President Bush called 'the New World Order' created a political environment in which the major powers were united in wanting to use the Security Council to promote peace and resolve conflicts. As a result, the Council was able to function more effectively than it had ever done before. It was rarely blocked by an actual or threatened veto by one of the permanent members.

Secondly, most of the existing wars were proxy conflicts of the Cold War. One side was supported and armed by the Soviet bloc and the other was supported and armed by the West. With the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, East and West were no longer competing for the allegiance of Third World countries. The proxy wars thus lost their *raison d'être* and the protagonists could no longer rely on their former patrons for financial, military and political support.

The most telling example of this was in Central America. In Nicaragua a Marxist government faced an insurrection by a right-wing guerrilla movement supported by the United States. In El Salvador and Guatemala, right wing governments confronted leftist guerrilla movements. Moscow supported the government in Nicaragua and the guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala; Washington supported the guerrillas in Nicaragua and the governments in the other two countries. With the Cold War over, each side in each of the three countries saw that it was unlikely to achieve its objectives by military means and that a negotiated settlement was a better option. This made it possible for the United Nations and other third parties to mediate peaceful settlements of all three conflicts.

But in some other Third World countries, notably Afghanistan and Angola, long-running wars were not due only to the Cold War. They had indigenous causes too. The sense of common purpose in the Security Council was not sufficient to bring them to an end. In each country, leaders of the rival factions still believed that they

could achieve their objectives by military means and therefore fought on. In Angola the government eventually won; in Afghanistan the outcome is still not known.

The third factor which led to the proliferation of peacekeeping operations was an increase in the number of wars in the world. There was more work for peacekeepers and peacemakers to do, especially in Africa and in former Communist countries in Eurasia. The surge of wars in Africa was, and is still, primarily due to weak and corrupt governance throughout that continent, exacerbated by ethnic and religious tensions. In Eurasia, the conflicts were almost entirely due to internal disputes which were generated by the break-up of the Soviet empire and of the Yugoslav federation.

From Dawn to Dusk

The end of the Cold War was thus a new dawn for United Nations peacekeeping. For ten years peacekeeping had been stagnant, without a single new operation being established. Now they came thick and fast – two in 1988, three in 1989, five in 1991, six in 1992, another six in 1993. At the beginning of 1988, the UN had just over 10,000 troops and police in the field in five operations; by the end of 1994 they numbered 78,000 in fifteen operations.

After 40 years of Cold War frustration, this expansion of United Nations peace operations had a euphoric effect on the Secretariat and on some Member States. But the effect was not universally euphoric. Third World countries began to express concern at what they saw as a Western campaign to take over the United Nations and use it to promote Western interests. They were worried by a perceived transfer of resources and political energy from economic and social development to the maintenance of peace and security. They were also worried that the Security Council's new willingness to involve itself in internal conflicts threatened the sovereignty of the countries concerned.

And within the Secretariat some wise voices, of which mine was not one, began to question whether the Secretariat had the capacity to manage such an enormous expansion of activity. Most of us, however, were intoxicated by our successes – in bringing Namibia to independence; in ending the war between Iran and Iraq; in bringing peace to Cambodia, Central America and Mozambique; and in helping to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

This euphoria led us to pay insufficient heed to the fragility of the structures in New York which were responsible for managing these demanding field operations. We also failed to ask ourselves how long the developed countries would go on contributing troops to them and paying more than 90 per cent of their costs, which by 1994 had reached \$2.7 billion per year.

The Secretariat in New York was overwhelmed by the increase in peacekeeping work and we began to devote less than adequate time to research on, and analysis of, the conflicts to which peacekeepers were to be deployed. Some of the members of the Security Council were also careless in accepting the Secretary-General's recommendations without adequate examination of how far they were based on sound research and analysis.

Other members of the Council were worse than careless; they were cynical in using the Secretary-General and his staff as scapegoats for failures for which they themselves were responsible. The classic example of this was the so-called 'safe areas' in Bosnia. The three Western permanent members of the Council, plus the two elected European members, pressed the Secretary-General to designate six Muslim-majority cities in Bosnia as 'safe areas' which would be garrisoned by UNPROFOR, the UN force in the former Yugoslavia.

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali doubted the viability of this concept but submitted it to his military advisers. They told him that the task envisaged would require 34,500 additional troops. The Western members of the Security Council insisted that this would be too expensive and pressured the Secretary-General into accepting that the job could be done by only 7,500 additional troops. It soon became clear that this was not sufficient either to deter the Serb forces from attacking one or more of the safe areas or even to keep the UN garrisons adequately supplied. The members of the Council took no action and in July 1995 Bosnian Serb forces overran the Srebrenica safe area and massacred several thousand Muslim men and boys.

Coming after the failures of the United Nations and the United States in Somalia and the refusal of Member States to commit any of their forces to help stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the Srebrenica massacre undermined the credibility, and even the legitimacy, of United Nations peacekeeping. The total of troops and police deployed in UN operations plummeted from 78,000 in 1994 to barely 20,000 three years later.

The Dawn Can Come Again

These were severe setbacks for those who had placed unrealistically high hopes on peacekeeping after the end of the Cold War. But much had nevertheless been learnt during those dramatic years. The dawn is coming less rapidly than it did 15 years ago, but I am confident that it is coming. Three developments have been particularly promising.

The first is the evolution of multifunctional peacekeeping. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, a multifunctional pko is one that is set up after peacemakers have succeeded in getting the parties to negotiate a political settlement of their dispute. Its task is to help the parties implement that settlement in accordance with an agreed timetable. This task amounts to much more than monitoring. The parties are no longer enemies but nor are they yet friends. Inevitably, they sometimes disagree about what their peace agreement means or discover that some important issue has been omitted from it. That is when the head of the pko has to use her or his diplomatic skills to help resolve the contentious problem and not allow it to put the whole peace process at risk.

Implementation of a peace settlement requires many other civilian skills. The UN's role has to be explained to the people of the country or countries concerned; refugees have to be brought home and resettled; civilian employment has to be found for demobilized combatants; human rights have to be assured, which often means judicial reform and sometimes even the creation of a completely new police force; elections have to be monitored or even conducted by the UN itself, as was the case in Cambodia; post-war reconstruction has to be started and funds raised for it. With so

many civilian tasks to be performed, multifunctional pkos are invariably headed by a senior civilian.

Only one such operation was fielded during the Cold War, the small one in West Irian, which I have already mentioned. But twenty years later, the peace settlements spawned by the end of the Cold War created a demand for multifunctional peacekeeping operations. The pioneer operation of this type was the one in Namibia in 1989-90. It began disastrously but eventually succeeded in completing its task ahead of schedule and below budget. It set a high standard for a number of similar operations in the first half of the 1990s in Angola, El Salvador, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Mozambique, Haiti and Rwanda. Those in El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique and Haiti succeeded; those in Angola, Western Sahara and Rwanda failed.

The second promising development was revision of the doctrine on the use of force by peacekeepers. The original doctrine, as I said at the beginning, was that peacekeepers could not use force except in self-defence; there was, it was argued, no half-way house between peacekeeping, which is based on the consent of the hostile parties, and peace enforcement, which involves the use of force against a state or non-state actor which violates the peace. This doctrine led to the failure and humiliation of UN peacekeepers in conflicts, like the one in Bosnia, where UN troops were unable to use force to stop atrocities that were being committed before their eyes because they were not authorized to do so.

Such situations gave birth to a revised doctrine, under which a peacekeeping operation can be authorized to use force not only in self-defence but also to achieve specific objectives agreed by the parties. You may ask how this can be reconciled with the impartiality and neutrality which are essential conditions for successful peacekeeping. The answer is that these conditions can be met if force is used impartially against any individual who breaks the rules. You are shot not because of the party you belong to but because of what you do.

Sierra Leone is the best example of this revised doctrine. The parties there agreed that the tasks given to the UN force should include protecting humanitarian operations, preventing gross violations of human rights, guarding key installations and keeping communications open; the parties also agreed that the UN troops could, if necessary, use force to achieve these objectives. Impartiality was assured by authorizing the operation to use force against any individuals who broke the agreed rules, irrespective of which side those individuals belonged to.

In my view, this revision of doctrine is the most significant development in peacekeeping since the end of the Cold War. It rescues peacekeepers from the impotence which so often in the past discredited them, their countries and the international organization for which they were working.

The third promising development is that the members of the Security Council have also, I believe, learnt the lessons of the mid-1990s. Bad decisions taken then, especially in relation to Bosnia and Rwanda, contributed to the international community's loss of confidence in United Nations peacekeeping. The new prudence that is evident in the Security Council's deliberations, and the fact that some 40,000

uniformed personnel are now deployed in twelve operations, give grounds for confidence that peacekeeping is on the rebound and that a second new dawn may already be here. The sun is at present, however, still concealed by a cloud called 'unilateralism'. The severity of the threat that that cloud presents is one of the issues we will debate at Round Table 2 tomorrow.