
U.N. Peacekeeping Efforts to Promote Security and Stability

By

John R. Bolton
Assistant Secretary of State for
International Organization Affairs

[The following is a reprint of Mr. Bolton's statement to the Subcommittees on International Operations and on Human Rights and International Organizations of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on March 25, 1992, in Washington D.C.]

EXPANSION OF U.N. PEACEKEEPING

The last two years have seen an explosion in U.N. peacekeeping and peacemaking activities. Since last April alone, the Security Council has created new peacekeeping missions in the Persian Gulf, the Western Sahara, El Salvador, Cambodia, and Yugoslavia. Indeed, the last four years have seen the creation of more new U.N. peacekeeping operations than had been undertaken in the previous forty-three years of the organization's history.

Why has U.N. involvement in peacekeeping expanded so rapidly? The simplest answer is because the world has changed so much. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union has led to breathtaking changes in the relations among countries and among peoples, most of which have been for the good. They have not only brought freedom to millions of individuals who lived under the yoke of tyranny but will also lead to greater global prosperity and stability. Some changes have, however, been pernicious and have led to the open expression of long pent-up hatreds. In varying degrees, these regional conflicts damage U.S. interests and impact on our national security.

Overall, these changes in the world order have tremendously increased the importance of the U.N.'s peacekeeping role. With the end of the Cold War, the Security Council is finally able to carry out the chief duty entrusted to it by the founders of the United Nations—the preservation of international peace and security. No longer do animosities between the Soviet Union and the Western members prevent the council from taking action to resolve threats to the global peace.

Now, the members of the council work together effectively to address international problems which would have been allowed to fester a few short years ago. In case after case, the Security Council finds solutions to problems which once seemed intractable. Those solutions are frequently imperfect, and they always cost money. They do, however, usually prevent the expansion of conflict, [and they] have saved countless thousands of lives, and cost much less than direct U.S. involvement.

The end of the Cold War has not only made the Security Council a more effective institution for addressing threats to international peace, it has also meant that regional conflicts which were fueled by superpower rivalry are now ripe for resolution. In countries as diverse as Angola, El Salvador, and Cambodia, communist governments and guerrilla movements have realized that they can no longer count on outside support and must make peace. Given the long history of animosity, people in such countries naturally look for an impartial arbiter as they try to make the transition to a

point where U.N. peacekeeping could succeed. Similarly, the scores of millions of dollars we spent to ensure that a Marxist government did not stifle the will of the people of Angola more than offsets the money we are asked to spend to ensure that the United Nations can help demobilize the rival armies and hold fair elections. Finally, who in good conscience could walk away from the last, best chance to resolve the tragedy of Cambodia, a tragedy with which the American people have been linked for years? The United Nations is the best insurance against a return to power by the Khmer Rouge.

Even those U.N. peacekeeping missions with which our ties are less obvious usually directly benefit U.S. interests. For example, in many fields—investment, trade, strategic interests—our links to Yugoslavia are tenuous. Continuation of the war there, however, would have a direct, negative effect on many important U.S. interests in the area. To take one obvious example, the flow of large numbers of refugees could well have undermined the new, fragile democracies on Yugoslavia's northern and eastern borders.

KEEPING COSTS DOWN

While I continue to believe U.N. peacekeeping is a tremendous bargain, I am also painfully aware of the need to keep costs down. Our own domestic concerns demand it; so does the credibility of the United Nations.

How can we keep the cost of U.N. peacekeeping down? One way is to create as few new missions as absolutely necessary. The U.N. Charter makes it clear that regional organizations should take the lead in trying to solve regional problems; we fully support this approach.

Let me assure you that we do not view U.N. peacekeeping as the savior of lost causes, to be thrown into a crisis willy-nilly when all else fails. If new peacekeeping missions must be created, they must have as clearly defined a mandate as possible. Preferably, the duration of a new mission should be set in concrete and tied to a process which will clearly lead to a resolution of the underlying problem. The current U.N. peacekeeping missions in Angola, El Salvador, and Cambodia and the one successfully concluded in Namibia all share these characteristics.

Even if the duration of a peacekeeping mission cannot be so sharply defined, we must make it clear to all parties that U.N. peacekeeping is not an end in itself, U.N. peacekeepers will not serve as the perpetual guarantors of an armed truce. For example, the Security Council resolution authorizing peacekeeping in Yugoslavia specifically tied the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers to the attempts to negotiate a resolution to the crisis at the EC-sponsored Conference on Yugoslavia. We expect those talks to succeed; if they do not, however, and if the parties abandon good faith efforts to resolve their differences, the Security Council will have to reexamine the mandate of that mission.

Another way to keep costs down is to ensure that each individual mission is as lean and efficient as possible. We are in constant communication with the U.N. Secretariat to make certain that the number of peacekeepers deployed in each mission is the absolute minimum need[ed] to implement that mission's mandate. We also press the Secretariat to maximize voluntary contributions from the countries hosting peacekeeping missions and from countries with particular interests in the success of a given mission. These approaches have resulted in the savings of hundreds of millions of dollars from the estimates initially advanced by the United Nations for peacekeeping missions in Namibia and Angola. We expect that they will lead to even greater savings with respect to the upcoming missions in Cambodia and Yugoslavia.

Finally, let me assure you that we are examining the question of whether there is any honorable and equitable way to adjust the percentage that we pay of U.N. peacekeeping costs. We

cannot escape the fact that our economy is more than twice as large as that of any other nations. We cannot deny that we are the world's only remaining superpower. We cannot escape the reality that our overseas interests are broader and more compelling than those of any other country. Still, within those parameters, we will fight to ensure that the U.S. share Of U.N. peacekeeping is kept to an absolute minimum. To me, for the United States to continue to pay 30.4 percent of the total cost of U.N. peacekeeping does seem excessive.