
United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Supporting U.S. Interests

[The following is a reprint of an article which originally was published under the title, "Focus on the United Nations." in the *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, May 1, 1995, pp. 377-379.]

After World War II, the allies learned the lessons of the past. In the face of a new totalitarian threat and the nuclear menace, great nations did not walk away from the challenge of the moment. Instead, they chose to reach out, to rebuild, and to lead. They chose to create the United Nations, and they left us stronger, safer, and freer. . . . We must ensure that those who fought . . . who love freedom, did not labor in vain.

President William J. Clinton
September 26, 1994

U.N. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: SUPPORTING U.S. INTERESTS

The peace and security activities of the United Nations directly support United States national interests.

Peacekeeping has the capacity, under the right circumstances, to separate adversaries, maintain cease-fires, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief, enable refugees and displaced persons to return home, demobilize combatants, and create conditions under which political reconciliation may occur and free elections may be held. In so doing, it can help nurture new democracies, lower the global tide of refugees, reduce the likelihood of unwelcome interventions by regional powers, and prevent small wars from growing into larger conflicts which would be far more costly in terms of lives and treasure.

[Were there no U.N. peacekeeping.] it would leave us with an unacceptable option when emergencies arose: a choice between acting alone and doing nothing.

Warren M. Christopher
Secretary of State
January 6, 1995

Burdensharing. In the post-Cold War world, one of the best vehicles to ensure burdensharing is peacekeeping. Nations that would not otherwise deploy their military force outside of their own borders send their men and women around the world on U.N. peace missions. More than 90 nations have deployed troops on U.N. missions; 77 countries have troops deployed today. In February 1995, 25 nations had more troops deployed in U.N. missions than did the United States. Since the U.S. makes many other voluntary contributions in support of U.N. activities that directly serve U.S. interests, this ranking is by no means indicative of our broader role as an international leader. It is, however, indicative of the contributions many other nations make in sharing the burden of keeping the peace.

Beyond contributing their forces, other nations pay the lion's share of the cost of U.N. peacekeeping operations—70 percent of total U.N. costs for peacekeeping is assumed by other nations. The Administration seeks to increase the non-U.S. burden to 75 percent.

Were it not for the United Nations, in many cases the United States would be forced to act unilaterally. The U.S. share of the personnel and finances of such operations would normally be far more than its contribution to U.N. peacekeeping operations.

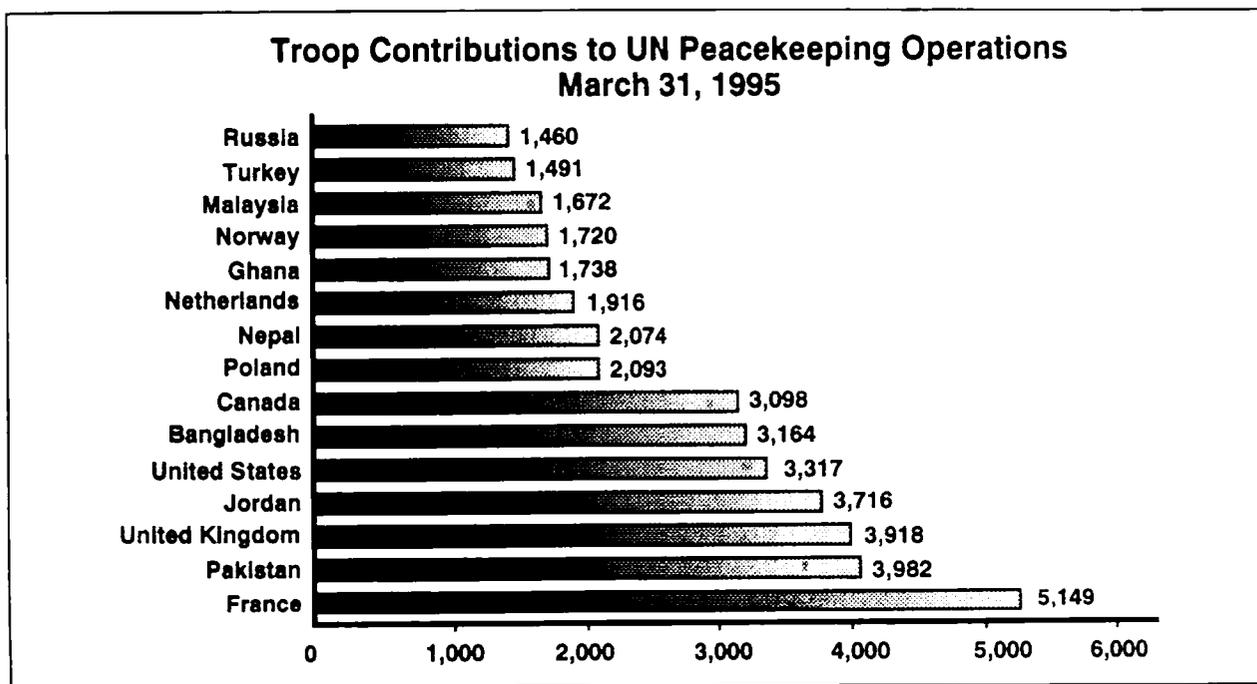
U.S. and U.N.—Acting in Concert. The map of U.N. peacekeeping deployments closely parallels the pattern of U.S. interests. U.N. peacekeepers patrol the borders of America's close ally, Israel. They separate forces tied to our Greek and Turkish allies in NATO. They have helped resolve festering regional conflicts in Europe, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Central America.

The United Nations Security Council also provides international backing for U.S. actions. In recent years, the U.N. authorized U.S. military deployments in the Persian Gulf, Horn of Africa, and the former Yugoslavia.

Most recently, the Clinton Administration won Security Council authorization for deployment of a multinational force to Haiti that has restored democracy. Security Council support was instrumental in gaining agreement from more than two dozen other countries to participate in the multinational force, maximizing global diplomatic support for the operation and allowing the U.S. to execute the transition to a U.N. peacekeeping force.

To the extent future peacekeeping missions succeed, they will lift from the shoulders of American servicemen and servicewomen and the taxpayers a great share of the burden of collective security operations around the globe.

Madeleine Albright
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
September 23, 1994



U.N. peacekeeping forces moved in after U.S. forces had been drawn down in Kuwait, Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti. Their arrival allowed thousands of U.S. forces to return home safely.

Humanitarian Relief. Concomitant with wars of ethnicity or nationalism and by-products of failed states are mass migration, refugees, famine, and disease. A necessary component of restoring peace and security is stabilizing these calamities and then providing a way for refugees to return home. The United Nations, particularly its High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), plays a key role in coordinating and delivering the world's assistance.

In many instances, U.N. peacekeepers provide security for the return of refugees and the delivery of humanitarian relief by UNHCR and the many government and private voluntary groups that offer assistance. Peacekeepers and relief organizations have worked side by side in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Georgia, Mozambique, and elsewhere.

Were it not for the combined efforts of peacekeepers and relief workers, millions more would have died in these conflicts alone. Thus, even when peace has not yet been obtained, peacekeepers have made valuable contributions by saving lives.

The American people overwhelmingly support helping the innocent victims in such disasters, but they do not wish to act alone. The United Nations relief and peacekeeping agencies together provide a vehicle for the world to unite to deal collectively with such emergencies.

Role of Peacekeeping in U.S. Foreign Policy. Peacekeeping is one useful tool to help prevent and resolve regional and other conflicts before they pose direct threats to our national security, which can be addressed only by the use of massive military force.

U.S. Participation in U.N. Peace Operations. In some circumstances, the participation of U.S. military personnel in U.N. operations advances U.S. interests.

- First, U.S. military participation may be necessary to persuade others to participate in operations that serve U.S. interests.
- Second, U.S. participation may enable the U.S. to exercise influence over an important U.N. mission without unilaterally bearing the burden.
- Third, the U.S. may be called upon and choose to provide unique capabilities to important operations that other countries cannot.

Command and Control. The President will never—and under the constitution may never—relinquish his command authority over our military personnel at any time. Command constitutes the authority to issue orders covering every aspect of military operations and administration. By law, the chain of command flows from the President to the lowest U.S. commander in the field and remains inviolate.

It has been long-standing U.S. policy, when it serves U.S. interests, to place U.S. forces under the temporary operational control of another commander. We have done this since the Revolutionary War, through World Wars I and II, Operation Desert Storm, and in U.N. peacekeeping operations and NATO since their inceptions. This procedure enables the U.S. to participate in operations that directly serve U.S. interests, such as the U.N. mission in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but limit our exposure. Moreover, when we are willing to provide U.S. forces to collective security actions, we reap the reciprocal benefits of having the flexibility to use portions of other countries' forces, as in the Gulf War, to achieve common military objectives.

U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations. The Clinton Administration is pursuing policies to improve and reform U.N. peacekeeping so that it better serves U.S.

interests. In May 1994, President Clinton signed a Presidential Decision Directive on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations. The policy is premised on the need to reform, not debilitate, U.N. peacekeeping.

To maximize the benefits of U.N. peacekeeping, the United States must make highly disciplined choices about when and under what circumstances to support or participate in such operations. The need to exercise such discipline is at the heart of President Clinton's policy, which requires that tough questions be asked about the costs, size, risks, mandate, and duration of operations before they are started or renewed. The U.S. has not hesitated to use its position on the Security Council to insist that satisfactory answers to these questions be provided prior to Council action. The goal is simple: ensure that U.N. missions have clear and realistic objectives, that peacekeepers are equipped properly, that money is not wasted, and that an endpoint to U.N. action can be identified. That new policy is working and has resulted in fewer and smaller new operations and better management of existing ones.

President Clinton's policy directive addresses six major issues of reform and improvement:

- Ensuring disciplined choices about which peace operations to support and when to participate with U.S. forces;
- Reducing U.S. costs for U.N. peace operations;
- Reaffirming long-standing U.S. policy regarding the command and control of U.S. forces in U.N. peace operations;
- Reforming and strengthening the U.N.'s capability to manage peace operations effectively;
- Improving the way the U.S. Government manages and funds peace operations; and
- Improving cooperation between the Executive Branch, the Congress, and the American public on peace operations.

THE PRICE OF PEACE

While the cost of U.N. peacekeeping has increased rapidly in the post-Cold War era, the absolute cost to the U.S. remains a small portion of our national security expenses—the equivalent of less than one half of 1 percent of the Department of Defense budget. While U.N. peacekeeping costs can and must be better contained, they represent a far cheaper choice than either of the alternatives. U.N. peacekeeping is far more economical for the U.S. than acting unilaterally or ignoring opportunities for peace and confronting crises only after they have spread and directly threaten U.S. national security interests.

Dramatic Cost Growth. During the Cold War, one or both of the two superpowers generally opposed using U.N. peacekeeping to deal with most crises. In the immediate aftermath of that period, however, both sides urged the U.N. to create numerous new peacekeeping operations.

**UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS
With More Than 5,000 Troops**

Date started	U.N. mission	Status
7/60	ONUC (Congo)	Completed
3/78	UNIFIL (Lebanon)	Ongoing
4/89	UNTAG (Namibia)	Completed
3/92	UNPROFOR (Former Yugoslavia)	Ongoing
3/92	UNTAC (Cambodia)	Completed
12/92	ONUMOZ (Mozambique)	Completed
3/93	UNOSOM II (Somalia)	Completed
10/93	UNAMIR (Rwanda)	Ongoing
3/95	UNIMIH (Haiti)	Ongoing

In the last Administration, the United States sponsored or supported U.N. resolutions that increased the number of U.N. peacekeepers from fewer than 10,000 to more than 70,000. That seven-fold increase in the number of peacekeepers deployed caused an increase in the cost of U.N. peacekeeping operations by more than a factor of seven. It is the bow wave from those increases that has presented the large U.N. assessments that, as a formal U.S. treaty commitment, we have had to face in the last few years.

Many of the large and most costly operations are now coming to a close. The Cambodia mission, which at one point deployed almost 20,000 peacekeepers and was the largest operation ever attempted at that time, has been completed.

Reducing Costs. The U.S. is actively working to lower our peacekeeping assessment to 25 percent by October 1995. In addition to reducing the U.S. share of U.N. peacekeeping costs, we must also reduce costs to all U.N. members by finding ways for the U.N. to do needed missions more efficiently. The United States has, for example, presented the U.N. with an analysis of procurement procedures and specific proposals for cost containment and reduction of peacekeeping costs. In addition, the U.S. actively supported the recently adopted rules changes that reduce the amount paid by the U.N. for heavy equipment (tanks, armored personnel carriers) that troop contributors bring with them on peacekeeping missions. We continue to actively pursue additional cost-containment measures.

The greatest savings, however, will come from more discretion in approving and sizing peacekeeping operations. Pursuant to President Clinton's policy, the United States now requires internal U.S. Government analyses of the potential costs, appropriate sizing, probability of success, end-game/exit strategy, and other considerations before supporting new U.N. peacekeeping operations. Moreover, we have been able to gain U.N. Security Council agreement to a similar procedure employed by that body prior to authorizing new missions. Rigorous application of such analysis is a key element of reducing costs and improving the quality of U.N. missions.