

UN PEACEKEEPING AT THE CROSSROADS

Speech by Senator the Hon Gareth Evans QC, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, to open the International Peacekeeping Seminar, Canberra 22 March 1993.

This seminar should offer all of us who have an active involvement and interest in peacekeeping the opportunity to develop further our ideas about the future of UN peacekeeping and how its operation might be improved. Given the extraordinary challenges facing the international community in trying to secure peace in the post-Cold War era, we should use the opportunity of this seminar and its broadly based participation to look at the relationship between peacekeeping and the broader collective security mandate of the international community, and how peacekeeping and collective security can be made more complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Australia has participated in eleven UN peacekeeping operations to date and we have been a member of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations since its inception. The current, historically unprecedented level of Australian contribution to peacekeeping operations underlines our own dedication to the success of peacekeeping generally. We are currently contributing large forces to UNTAC in Cambodia and UNITAF in Somalia, and have smaller contingents with UNOSOM, MINURSO, UNFICYP, UNPROFOR and UNTSO. We have also contributed personnel to collective security activity other than through peacekeeping operations, such as through the Mine Clearance Training Team in Pakistan and UNSCOM in Iraq. Our role in peacekeeping will be described in more detail by Major-General Blake later in the Seminar.

As the title of this Seminar states, UN peacekeeping is at the crossroads. We are at the crossroads because the end of the Cold War has brought with it complex challenges to international security - increasing multipolarity, interdependence of nations and enhanced credibility of the UN on the one hand but, on the other, humanitarian crises, ethnic conflicts within - and spilling over - national borders, the breakup of states and the unsustainability over the longer term of expecting one superpower, or even a small group of powerful countries, to act as the world's policeman. The world is not a more peaceful place. Existing mechanisms at the international, regional and national level are not coping effectively with the

post Cold War challenges to security.

There are currently 13 UN peacekeeping operations involving 55,000 troops contributed by UN Member States. This figure could shortly increase by well over 100,000 military personnel with the expansion of UNOSOM and UNPROFOR and the full deployment of ONUMOZ. The cost in 1992 was almost US\$3 billion. Peacekeeping operations have increased not just in number. The scope of peacekeeping operations has also expanded significantly, particularly in Cambodia and Somalia. There is a new willingness to explore the extent of the Security Council's mandate to ensure international security, including through unprecedented deployment of peacekeeping operations.

We now have enough recent experience of peacekeeping, including test cases such as Namibia, Cambodia and Somalia, to make sensible choices about the future development of peacekeeping.

But the expansion and diversification of UN collective security operations has occurred largely without real debate or explicit consensus on the development of the UN's role, and the appropriate limits to it, either political or practical. Our intention in hosting this Seminar is to provide a forum for debate on these issues.

Clearly we need to commence our analysis with an honest assessment of whether peacekeeping in its current format is working effectively, and what the impediments are to the immense task the international community has set itself for keeping and securing the peace. From there we move logically to identifying recommendations for improving the peacekeeping operations themselves. Some of the more prominent issues to be addressed here are how we can improve peacekeeping mandates and operations, whether a peacekeeping operation is always the most appropriate response to a particular security problem and how peacekeeping as a whole can be put on a more secure organisational and financial footing.

But as we all know, peacekeeping does not operate in a political and strategic vacuum. It is therefore equally important to identify a much broader set of standards, measures and responses which will enhance the ability of the international community to deal with the entire gamut of international security problems, and within which the specific task of peacekeeping should be able to function better as a consequence.

Is peacekeeping working?

Increased peacekeeping activity has imposed an increased burden on the UN. Today, the UN is seeking to respond to crises spread across several continents but without sufficient resources to do so effectively. While there have been some notable successes for the UN such as Namibia, El Salvador and within recognised constraints, Cambodia, other operations - most recently, UNOSOM I in Somalia - have been severely criticised as providing too little too late.

The deployment of UNOSOM to Somalia was carried out without adequate forward planning. In its traditional self-defence role, UNOSOM was unable to deal effectively with heavily armed Somali factions. UNITAF, a Chapter VII enforcement operation, has been able to achieve what UNOSOM originally could not. It seems that the lessons from UNOSOM may have been learned. UNOSOM II is likely to have a mandate with teeth and with an integrated role including facilitating national reconciliation and rehabilitation.

In Cambodia, the peace process, despite obstruction from the Khmer Rouge, is on track with the successful repatriation of over 330,000 refugees and the registration of more than 4.5 million voters for elections in May which will install a legitimate, elected government. UNTAC's task is daunting, but it is a mark of the very great distance we, as UN members, have travelled in the last two years that such an undertaking has become a reality. UNTAC was set up under the Paris Agreements after a great deal of preparatory work - to which Australia made a significant contribution - on conceptual and operational considerations and UNTAC has been a [relative] success, while other operations that did not enjoy such forward planning have not been as successful.

For any future operations on such a scale, we need to address the problem of unwieldy and imprecise mandates, and the question of redefining those mandates as multi-dimensional and non-static situations evolve over time.

There have also been UN Peacekeeping operations where the costs have arguably outweighed the benefits. In Cyprus the continuing presence of the peacekeeping force perhaps provides an easy excuse for the parties to continue not talking to one another. In Mozambique, the UN operation's deployment has been delayed and there are signs the window of opportunity for a peaceful resolution may be closing. In Angola, the UN has been unfairly criticised by one of the parties for being ineffective in the face of the collapse of the peace process. In Bosnia-

Herzegovina the deployment of a UN force also appears to be a case of too little too late and inadequate forward planning.

Criticisms are also heard of the civilian components of peacekeeping operations and centralisation of the command and management structures in New York.

We need, in other words, to ask if the UN is trying to do too much and consider the extent to which the UN's own shortcomings contribute to the problems of making peacekeeping work.

When is peacekeeping appropriate?

We may, for example, need to discuss the development of some flexible general principles or guidelines which would allow us to determine in which circumstances the international community should consider UN peacekeeping. And when we reach the point of considering peacekeeping as an option, we need a framework to evaluate whether the benefits of deploying troops outweigh the costs, and whether the same expected outcome could be attained by other means.

To answer these questions we need to examine the limits on the potential of peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations are unlikely to be able to resolve disputes just by being there. Deployment will only be appropriate, in most instances, where a political solution is already within reach. If there is no real prospect of a political solution, all peacekeepers can do is hold the line, perhaps indefinitely and perhaps at the risk of reducing the incentives for dialogue and peaceful resolution.

We could also usefully consider some general guidelines for setting time limits to peacekeeping operations. The mandate for a peacekeeping operation needs to establish a clear purpose and a clear, achievable goal for the operation. Once that goal, or benchmarks on the way to it, have been reached, decisions need to be taken about scaling down the forces and ultimately their withdrawal. Do we pull forces out if efforts at peacemaking consistently fail? Do we pull them out after some anticipated event such as elections? Or do we leave forces to oversee a "settling down" period? What if the goal is a successful election process but in the post-election period the unsuccessful party or parties do not accept the result, as in Angola? [Some of these questions may soon be confronting us in Cambodia.] We need to address these questions if we are to continue committing forces in such large numbers and in so many locations and if the business of

peacekeeping is to remain credible.

How can we make peacekeeping operations work better?

The Secretary General has raised many important issues in his "Agenda for Peace," which points the way towards an enhanced role for the UN in seeking to prevent and/or resolve serious conflicts and crises and in establishing a framework for effective collective security. The Secretary General's proposals on strengthening and better managing peacekeeping operations will be addressed by Robert Grey and others during the Seminar. I want to mention only a few of the issues.

While the idea of a UN "standing army" or "rapid deployment force" is seriously hampered by the difficulty of predetermining a UN force structure when specific skills would be needed for each and every operation, national earmarking or identification of forces would appear to be a practicable way of assisting the UN to improve planning. It carries no obligation to commit such forces without a case-by-case decision made on a national basis. In 1990, for example, Australia provided, in response to a UN questionnaire, a broad and detailed list of personnel and equipment that could, in principle, be made available for UN peacekeeping duties. We do not consider it necessary, however, to nominate specific units for peacekeeping duties, nor to place specific forces on standby.

Recent experience has shown how funding, procurement and logistical shortcomings hamper the timely deployment of peacekeeping operations. Deployment requires prior agreement on precise arrangements for start-up funding and adequate prior planning, including coordination between procurement and logistics planning. We should explore how procurement procedures could be improved. Logistics planning needs to be part of preliminary planning and procedures standardised so that a logistics system is established on the ground at the same time as deployment. Considerable savings could be made if planning for new peacekeeping operations was undertaken in a more pro-active and detailed way and forces deployed in a more orderly manner.

At our national and regional levels, we can pursue increased peacekeeping operation effectiveness by improving military and police training in the principles and procedures for peacekeeping-type duties and factoring such potential action into planning for bilateral and regional defence exercises and defence cooperation programs. We are establishing in Australia a peacekeeping

centre to provide such training and would welcome regional participation.

How are we to fund peacekeeping?

The last thing we want to see resulting from the unprecedented increase in UN peacekeeping activities is less respect for the authority of the UN by stretching its limited capabilities and resources too far. But this is exactly what is likely to happen if there continue to be insufficient resources for planning and carrying out peacekeeping.

In two years, the cost of peacekeeping has risen from US\$400 million in 1991 to an estimated US\$3 billion this year. The revised mandate for UNPROFOR could cost another US\$2 billion per annum. It is essential that we overcome the difficulties and delays associated with inadequate financial arrangements for peacekeeping. The inadequacy arises in part from the failure of member states in the past to pay their contributions in full and on time. While alternative funding sources, such as voluntary contributions and contributions in kind, can supplement funding, assessed contributions remain the only sure method of funding UN peacekeeping operations.

On the positive side, the General Assembly has established the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund and automatic approval of one-third of the anticipated budget for peacekeeping operations to enable speedy and effective deployment. The use of the Reserve Fund for ongoing peacekeeping operations must not, however, leave the Fund dry for the start-up costs for new peacekeeping operations such as ONUMOZ and UNOSOM II.

Peacekeeping and the role of the international community in securing peace in the post-Cold War era

It is important that we don't consider peacekeeping operations in isolation. Peacekeeping is one option amongst many for the international community in responding to the breakdown of international peace and security. Ideally, peacekeeping should be one of the last rungs on a ladder of proportionate responses to a security crisis, based on a more elaborate range of measures we should routinely pursue before turning to peacekeeping deployment.

The effectiveness of peacekeeping operations is very much a function of the overall effectiveness of a range of other aspects of collective security. And it is

no secret that existing mechanisms at the international, regional and national levels are not coping effectively with post-Cold War challenges to security. The establishment of a true system of collective security will require a range of options for action in response to crises and a graduated response so that each action is necessary, proportionate and tailored to the various stages of disputes and conflicts.

The immediate analytical need is to define the proper scope and limits of the international community's responsibility in responding to international security problems, and to identify and then recommend changes necessary to enable that responsibility to be more effectively exercised.

This is, of course, a very ambitious and much larger undertaking to which I cannot do justice in my address today. But let me touch just briefly on one aspect of this issue which relates to the types of response the international community, including the UN, could make to security problems which would complement and help strengthen peacekeeping operations. A number of these responses are yet to be systematically codified, let alone implemented effectively. Some of them cover the full range of security issues, be they military, economic, social or environmental. They can be sub-divided into three categories: prevention, assistance and intervention.

Preventive strategies are those which are pursued before a dispute has reached the point of armed conflict (or at least before it has reached crisis proportions). They can take the form of preventive diplomacy - applying, in a pre-conflict context, the kinds of measures identified in Article 33 of the UN Charter - or, as most recently proposed in the Secretary General's "Agenda for Peace", preventive deployment. Arms control and disarmament measures also fall into the preventive category. Preventive strategies are arguably the most underdeveloped, and yet potentially the most cost-effective peacekeeping measures. Dr Wilenski will be addressing some aspects of the Secretary General's proposals on preventive diplomacy and Australian ideas in his paper to the Seminar.

Assistance strategies are those which apply after armed conflict has occurred, and rely on the agreement of the country or parties concerned. They include peacemaking diplomacy; peacemaking deployment; peacekeeping and expanded notions of peacekeeping; and peacebuilding.

Almost all peacekeeping operations have fallen within these categories of

assistance responses. Increased interest in concepts such as expanded peacekeeping or peacebuilding reflects the evolution of peacekeeping from the passive role of an intermediary force, "the thin blue wedge", to a more active presence expected to deliver, or directly assist in the delivery of non-military security goals such as humanitarian relief or restoration of the rule of law. International security is increasingly seen as multidimensional. But some peacekeeping operations have been essentially ad hoc responses and their evolution into a more active role has been more a series of further ad hoc responses to changing circumstances on the ground than an organised, multidimensional approach.

Intervention strategies may occur in response to a pre-conflict dispute or during a dispute or crisis. Where they differ from peacekeeping is that intervention strategies do not involve the prior agreement of the affected country or all parties. The kinds of action entailed are essentially those set out in Chapter VII of the UN Charter and comprise sanctions, peace-enforcement in response to cross-border aggression, peace-enforcement in response to internal security breakdown and the enforcement of arms control and disarmament measures.

Peace-enforcement (eg the Gulf War) will continue to differ markedly from the great majority of situations in which UN peacekeeping operations are considered appropriate. But in understanding the evolving role of UN peacekeeping, we need to keep a focus on Chapter VII of the Charter as the dynamic nature of many crises and conflicts can see peacekeepers expected to change roles rapidly.

You will be well aware that the types of responses I have just briefly outlined can only succeed if there is also some measure of understanding between states about the comparative responsibility of nation states and the international community in tackling security problems. There will also always be practical constraints, not least of which are lack of resources and the difficulty of trying to identify correct responses to situations which are constantly evolving or changing.

What the international community can do now is to map out for itself a more graded and coherent strategy for dealing with threats to peace and security which will contribute to the effective collective security system the world so badly needs.

Peacekeeping is an important component of collective security, but as I have emphasised, the ultimate effectiveness of peacekeeping is a stronger international

collective security system to which the international community must devote a great deal more energy. As the current tragedies of the almost 30 current conflicts - of which the crises in Somalia and the Balkans are only two of the most extreme examples - dramatically illustrate, the international community cannot afford to delay any longer its consideration of how it can finally put into full effect the mandate bestowed upon it by the United Nations Charter to maintain international peace and security.

This Seminar can be an important first step in that direction.