UN Collective Security: Chapter Six and a Half

JOHN F. HILLEN III

© 1994 John F. Hillen III

"Peacekeeping isn't a soldier's job, but only a soldier can do it."¹
— Charles Moskos

The change in UN collective security missions since the Cold War appears profound with even a cursory glance at the numbers: from less than 10,000 "blue helmets" in 1987 to about 90,000 now. The cost of these operations has increased exponentially, from $700 million two years ago to a budget of more than $3.6 billion by the end of 1993.² However, what really should draw the attention of the professional soldier is the ambitious nature of the collective security operations undertaken since 1988. The new missions take place in locations that have been freed from the restrictive but structured environment of the Cold War. The locale is often characterized by complete chaos: no civil order and a substantial loss of national infrastructure, as in Bosnia, Somalia, and Cambodia.

UN collective security operations span a broad operational spectrum: from unarmed peace observation to full-fledged combat enforcement missions. Most UN missions, however, fall between these extremes, and have acquired the rather elastic label of "peacekeeping." During its first 40 years of existence, the UN conducted 13 peacekeeping missions. All generally shared the same assertive characteristics and modest ambitions. Unarmed or lightly armed UN peacekeepers were put into place with the approval of the belligerents involved and after a cease-fire agreement had been signed. Their duty was usually to monitor an agreed-upon buffer zone or troop withdrawal that followed the cessation of hostilities. In these cases, the UN was exercising its mandate to mediate the differences between sovereign states. Its Charter forbade interfering in intrastate conflicts except where they might threaten "international stability."

Spring 1994
Peacekeeping operations, which comprise the majority of the UN's attempts to advance international peace and security in the world, were never intended to function as such in the UN Charter. Chapter Six of the Charter gives the UN the power to mediate international disputes between states and recommend terms of a settlement. In this context, the UN still relies on the states to carry out voluntarily the decisions of the Security Council. Chapter Seven of the Charter is more powerful, and Article 42 of that chapter gives the UN authority to use the armed forces of member states to "maintain or restore international peace and security." However, as the multilateral agreements for the provision of these UN forces have never been concluded (Article 43), UN enforcement operations have always been hastily improvised, much like peacekeeping missions. The UN operation in Korea 1950-1953 was conducted under purposefully vague Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, generally without specific reference to UN Charter provisions. The Gulf War, and UNITAF (Operation Restore Hope) and UNOSOM II in Somalia, are the only operations for which the Security Council cited Chapter Seven authority to permit the use of coercive force in carrying out its resolutions. Yet Korea and the Gulf War may always be characterized as coalitions that operated as a veneer for US interests. The United Nations has rarely functioned in the collective security mode for which it was intended.

Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, recognizing the improvised nature of any type of UN collective security attempted during the Cold War, labeled UN peacekeeping operations as "Chapter Six and a Half" to characterize their tenuous legitimacy under the Charter. Council recommendations under Chapter Six during the Cold War were not enforceable, while full-scale military intervention under Chapter Seven could never be agreed upon by the superpowers. Cold War peacekeeping operations were sufficiently unambitious to merit approval by the superpowers and their clients. The UN characterized peacekeeping as a "holding action born of necessity and largely improvised." Peacekeeping operations conducted before 1989 reflect the full effects of Cold War stasis.

The vast array of peacekeeping missions in progress today have their roots in a "make-do" concept that was designed to operate below the thresh-

---

John F. Hillen III is a doctoral candidate and overseas research scholar at Oxford. He served as a Regular Army armor officer with the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment from 1989 to 1992. During Operation Desert Storm he was the 2d Squadron's plans officer and operated the squadron's forward command post from a Bradley fighting vehicle during the Battle of the 73 Easting. He holds a bachelor's degree in public policy studies and history from Duke University and an M.A. in war studies from King's College, London. He is an Army Reserve officer and serves periodically as a battalions officer in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, US Army, Europe. This article is adapted from a paper presented to the biennial conference of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, of which he is a fellow.

---

Parameters
old of superpower confrontation. Since the geopolitical atmosphere that weakened them has been changed, perhaps we should begin to question their effectiveness and usefulness. UN peacekeeping operations of the past—no matter how meek their mandate, humble their ambitions, conciliatory their nature, or unaggressive their character—are the model for today’s more ambitious collective security tasks. Cast in the old mold, created for modest success in a geopolitical environment that no longer exists, UN peacekeeping operations now shackle the political will of the international community and confound the soldiers sent to make them work.

Forty years of Cold War era peacekeeping experience produced a fairly comprehensive doctrine for peacekeeping missions, recently articulated by the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations. Adherence to these “Principles of Peacekeeping” is a virtual precondition for UN peace operations. The missions in Bosnia and Somalia have systematically violated every one of them.

- **The first principle of peacekeeping is that operations should be UN operations: formed by the UN, commanded in the field by a UN-appointed officer, under the ultimate authority of the Secretary General, and financed by member states collectively.** This principle was violated on two occasions when the UN “leased” the US-led task force (UNITAF) in Somalia and when it relied on NATO to support the no-fly zone and the Vance-Owen enforcement plan in Bosnia. The UN also expected participating nations and organizations to pick up the considerable tab for those missions.

- **The second principle of peacekeeping states that UN troops must be deployed with the consent of all the parties involved and only after a political settlement has been reached between warring factions.** Somalia and Bosnia have seen no such lasting settlements and there is hardly an environment of full consent for a UN presence in either area.

- **The third principle limits the intervening forces to strict impartiality.** Day-to-day operations in both Bosnia and Somalia have forced the UN troops to take sides because of their tenuous mandate to force certain actions on the belligerents. The actions to save Muslim enclaves in Bosnia and the attempt to capture General Aideed clearly violate the concept of strict impartiality.

- **The fourth principle maintains that in order to appear evenhanded, UN operations should not have an obvious superpower presence, but should use the volunteer units of the so-called “middle nations.”** In reality, ambitious missions such as those in Somalia and Bosnia require the UN to use great power forces because they are the only ones capable of establishing, controlling, and sustaining the complex military enterprises inherent in these new missions.

- **The fifth principle states that UN units should operate under rules of engagement (ROE) that stress the absolute minimum use of force in accomplishing their objectives.** In recent missions the ROE have been substantially expanded to allow peacekeepers to impose a solution on the local
parties through the use of force. Recognizable political dividends have yet to be harvested from the concept of “peacekeeping with teeth.”

Recent UN operations have fallen into a doctrinal black hole. Operational parameters for the unambitious observation and buffer-zone peacekeeping missions of the Cold War era reflected the “Principles of Peacekeeping.” Large-scale enforcement operations such as Korea and the Gulf War are largely conducted according to the principles of war and proven operational doctrine. Post-Cold War peacekeeping missions appear to have no doctrinal basis at all, which has produced the unprecedented political, strategic, and operational confusion over their conduct. These dilemmas stem from the fact that “the basic distinction between peacekeeping and enforcement action ... has been blurred.”6 That operational muddle must be cleared before other such second-generation missions are launched.

Why Soldiers Have Problems with Peacekeeping

The professional armed forces of the United States, especially the land forces, are currently trying to decide how peacekeeping fits into their occupational specialty—war. Is peacekeeping merely a subset of war, in which principles are easily transferred from the parent activity to its child? Or do war and peacekeeping exist as related but very different activities, perhaps more like disparate siblings?

Army doctrine is founded on nine long-standing principles of war that are somewhat timeless in their application to conflict. The first two principles are arguably the most important—objective and offensive. The principle of objective stipulates that every military operation must be directed toward a “clearly defined, decisive, and attainable” goal. The principle of offensive maintains that even in a temporary defensive posture, the military commander must always seek to “seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.”7 Initiative is also regarded in Army doctrine as one of the five basic tenets of Army operations.

Army doctrine on peacekeeping maintains that the “doctrine for war complements that for operations other than war.”8 The Army recognizes that peacekeeping may require modifying some warfighting principles and tenets, but it also suggests that even in a peacekeeping operation the military commander would never wish to abandon his focus on the objective or surrender the initiative. In a perfect world, the principles and tenets of peacekeeping operations would fit neatly under the umbrella of wartime doctrine.

Much of the consternation felt by military professionals over peacekeeping operations involves the principles of objective and initiative. Soldiers understand that peacekeeping operations rarely contain an objective as defined in doctrine, and few such operations allow their forces to take and keep the initiative. Most UN peacekeeping operations have been predicated on protracted and low-key tenacity, not quick and decisive strikes. Objectives are made innocuous and harmless enough to permit the many parties and belligerents
involved to reach consensus. The initiative lies with the belligerents, rather than with the peacekeepers, who are forced to react to events in an effort to appear impartial. The role of soldiers was to be static, reactive, and largely symbolic.

In some cases UN forces succeeded under the most remarkable circumstances, as in the case of a Finnish unit deployed to Egypt to supervise the cease-fire of the Yom Kippur war. Trying to halt an Israeli armored column, the Finns "put down their guns, lined up in the middle of the road, linked arms, and invited the advancing forces to barrel through them." The Israelis did not accept their challenge, and the cause of peace was furthered by the actions of the Finns. Nine years later, Israelis callously plowed through a UN checkpoint in Lebanon manned by Fijians, who were as powerless as the Finns had been. This was not an isolated occurrence, for "of the 800 peacekeepers who have died on missions since 1948, at least 25 have been Fijians killed in checkpoint clashes in Lebanon." 43

Peacekeepers have generally relied on the goodwill and cooperation of the belligerents as their only weapon—hardly a comforting thought for the professional soldier. Since the peacekeepers could not impose a solution, many missions were characterized by a simmering and occasionally volatile battle of attrition. The UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus is a good example of the nature of these commitments. United Nations forces have been deployed there since 1964 with no end in sight due to the lack of a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. After participating in the Cyprus force for 28 years, Canada recently decided to withdraw its troops for this very reason. Their operations were in no way designed to produce a solution; they were in fact perpetuating the status quo through their impotence.

Most peacekeeping operations have more in common with police procedures than with military doctrine. A police force accepts that its enemy will always exist, and it seeks to limit the level to which criminals can interfere with the public's affairs. It would be a ludicrous goal for a police force to expect to eliminate crime altogether—the expense alone would disrupt society. Conversely, the soldier may consider it equally ludicrous and dangerous to limit his means to the extent that he is caught in an attritional slugging match with the enemy. The military professional seeks decisive victory through combat, preferring to operate in the main with overwhelming force, rather than with limited force on the periphery.

Long, expensive, and inconclusive deployments can be expected from most of the new UN missions because we have complicated even further what we expect the UN soldier to accomplish. The mission in Cambodia, and operations under way in Somalia, the Balkans, and to a lesser extent in Mozambique, demonstrate these complications. Whereas their UN predecessors were responsible for monitoring a cease-fire or maintaining an agreed buffer zone, peacekeepers are now engaged in such activities as resettling refugees, delivering and safeguarding humanitarian aid, confiscating and
destroying arms and ammunition, organizing and monitoring elections, rebuilding national infrastructures, setting up and enforcing civil administration, and monitoring and enforcing human rights laws. They are to perform these tasks in areas where large, aggressive, and well-armed groups not accountable to higher authority are engaged in active and bloody fighting. In some cases, the factions have not agreed to a political solution; some groups do not even recognize the legitimacy of the UN mission in their homeland.

UN peacekeeping forces need to move beyond the limited peacekeeping missions shaped by the uncooperative atmosphere of the Cold War. Regrettably, and unnecessarily, we continue to place military forces in situations where the force does not have a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. We still ask soldiers to cede the initiative to the belligerents. We still use forces as symbols of international will, and those forces cannot exert that will without the cooperation of their adversaries. Perhaps the principal difference now is that the adversaries in many conflicts will not be answerable to the world body.

A US Role?

In the initial operation in Somalia, as in Desert Shield, the United States, although burdened by the coalition politics and committee decisions that prey on equal partners, was nevertheless able to plan and carry out a complex but successful operation. That success, however measured, resulted from assigning clear objectives and letting the military forces seize and retain the initiative against their adversaries. US policy set attainable goals that complemented US and allied military operations; despite criticism, the coalitions involved achieved worthwhile political objectives. Although Somalia under the UN is still in turmoil, the US-led coalition halted a raging civil war and allowed humanitarian aid to reach hundreds of thousands who might have perished without it.

The reputation of American forces has distinct advantages and disadvantages in UN peace support operations. On the one hand, a tangible American presence in a UN collective security operation gives that operation an air of seriousness which might not otherwise exist. On the other hand, a shrewd belligerent can use the American presence to its advantage, knowing the propensity of the American public and press to overreact to setbacks. If, for instance, any faction in Macedonia wished to place its struggle on the world’s front pages, it could do so by attacking the Americans, rather than the Danes or Swedes, in the UN force. Such an attack could leave the United States with three unpalatable options: withdraw in disgrace (as in Lebanon), reinforce and expand (as in Vietnam initially), or struggle on with a handicapped force and a mandate incapable of producing a worthwhile solution (as later in Vietnam).

One does not have to look far to sense the consternation in the professional Army by the introduction of warfighting into the new collective security environment. It is readily discernible at several levels with regard to a number of conflicts taking place today. Debates over potential large-scale interventions,
as in the Balkans, entail difficult choices. Makers of foreign policy seem to find
it hard to accept the military view that interventions by force will be necessarily
costly with no guarantee of success. Yet the military establishment is under-
standably reluctant to accept missions that do not promise victory for its forces
in the traditional sense, or an outcome that is politically important on its own.

The roots of this impasse lie far below the level of civil-military
relations and grand strategy. This friction is based in the struggle between the
duties of the professional soldier and the much more ubiquitous and thankless
tasks of the collective security peacekeeper. Uncertainty about individual and
unit roles, such as caused by the "mission creep" in Somalia, can undermine
the entire institution. Letters from soldiers deployed to Somalia show that the
American soldier is not easily acclimated to a peacekeeping role. Confusion
about enemies, objectives, rules of engagement, and how the soldiers are
perceived at home preoccupy them. Martin van Creveld was indeed wise to
note that "unless it takes cognizance of the things that men fight for, as well
as the motives that make them fight, no strategic doctrine is worth a fig." 11

Some cultures, Scandinavia comes to mind, have accepted long and
inconclusive deployments by their armed forces, where success may be defined
by inactivity. Their soldiers are trained with a peacekeeping doctrine emphasizing
patience, empathy, and the acceptance of their reduced roles. Can the
American Army reconcile this prospect to a doctrine calculated to breed initia-
tive, aggressiveness, and an appetite for the quick, decisive victory?

American Army combat troops are currently engaged in a collective
security mission under the command of a foreign general. In Macedonia,
where 300 American Army soldiers of the Berlin Brigade are deployed, the
Danish UN commander, General Finn Thomsen, has perhaps exaggerated the
difference between the training of the American and Scandinavian troops
under his command: "I'm not going to lose one single life because somebody
wants to be a hero," he stated when the American soldiers began arriving from
Berlin to join his operation. 12 In suggesting that the American soldiers were
trigger-happy Ramboes, he does them a great disservice. As a soldier, he knows
that the high level of discipline in the US unit will help it to avoid incidents.
Paradoxically, that discipline is a product of their intense training for combat.
As a professional, he knows that the United States Army is uncommonly good
at fighting and winning the decisive battle, but that it has had bad experiences
when seeking to do otherwise.

General Thomsen's solution was a sensible one: he put the American
soldiers through some on-the-job-training that emphasized the differences
between their warfighting role and their peacekeeping role. In a larger sense,
however, his plan for how he will deploy these American soldiers in Macea-
donia should sound a warning for US leaders: General Thomsen intends to
use the American contingent based on their value as a signal to the Serbs. He
plans to keep the US troops in reserve and will deploy them "if there is a need
to send the Serbs a specific, tougher message. The political message is stronger than if [the soldiers were from] Sweden.\textsuperscript{13} He intends to use 300 highly trained US combat troops as symbols—and their defense will be limited to the respect that the belligerents might have for the United States. The American infantrymen are without lethal US Bradley fighting vehicles because Thomsen felt such weapon systems would send too impressive and aggressive a signal to the potential combatants.\textsuperscript{14} A similar bluff was called in Lebanon, at the cost of over 200 American Marines.

There is no satisfaction in recalling previous instances where the Army has been used as a signalling device. In Vietnam, some units were formed, equipped, deployed, and employed largely on their value as a political signal.\textsuperscript{15} The Vietnam experience and the Marine tragedy in Lebanon contributed to the development of the Weinberger doctrine, which among other things made a clear point about not deploying American combat troops without "well-defined objectives and a consistent strategy."\textsuperscript{16} While maintaining peace in the turbulent Balkans may appear a sufficiently defined objective for some, it is an ambiguous and open-ended one by professional military standards.

Many UN collective security missions, most often Cold War era peacekeeping, presented few serious operational challenges to a professionally trained force; those that occurred could be handled as they arose. Small groups of soldiers were deployed in buffer-zone operations and generally protected from ambiguous and more-threatening situations by the paralysis of the Cold War. Now, however, we may see large Army deployments in unpredictable and dangerous settings with complex, ambitious, and evolving missions. Belligerents may try to incite American outrage by attacking US forces to obtain political advantage or to disrupt a coalition. Because any scenario is possible, the traditional ad hoc approach to UN collective security missions is no longer sufficient. Evolution to other forms of peace support will continue to perplex soldiers and policymakers alike.

\textit{"Winning" In the New Missions}

The nation’s strategic leadership and the Army are quite aware of these challenges and are preparing to meet them. No matter how urgent and ambitious the cause of UN collective security becomes, the Army rightly understands that it exists to fight and win the nation’s wars. Current doctrine is well documented as being among the most effective military doctrines of modern times. No opposing force can challenge the Army on its terms. The Army’s training and leadership development are superb; its force design and equipment are more than adequate.

So what needs to change for the Army to be successful in this tricky business of UN collective security? The Army is already in the process of creating, for the first time, doctrine for peace support operations (Field Manual 100-23). The realistic training for which the Army is justifiably world famous
now incorporates missions such as those associated with “operations other than war.” Cavalry units exercising at the US Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany in 1991 prepared only for conventional wartime scenarios. Two years later, combat units on the same ground were training just as hard for a diverse range of contingency missions ranging from disaster relief to humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping to counter-terrorist operations.

Changes in expectations, however, will have to occur at several levels if the Army is to succeed in UN collective security operations. Individual Army professionals will recognize that the principles of war are different from the principles of making peace. They must understand that the decisive and total victory for which they trained may not be even remotely achievable in a mission where restraint and perseverance, rather than mass and offensive, are the guiding principles. They will come to recognize that they may be cast in a very different role, one that may call on some of their wartime skills but deny them the related ways and means of meeting their objectives.

The Army as a professional body must revise its expectations just as it has revised its training and added to its doctrine. It will understand that it cannot always expect its missions to be clearly defined, attainable, and decisive. It will not always be deployed in such a way that its operations will produce a result that can be recognized as politically important on its own. It will not always be able to position itself to seize and retain the initiative. It may be forced to react to situations—it may even face situations in which it has the capability to exert control, but cannot for reasons other than military logic. This Army will learn to endure.

The Army must, however, as a professional body, always seek to minimize the effects of these situations on its soldiers. The memory of the Army’s success is kept in the Army, not in the transient world of the policymakers. Army professionals owe it to their soldiers to try to educate their civilian superiors in this regard.

At the same time, the policymakers who determine the US strategic agenda need to temper their expectations with regard to the use of force. A military force constrained by UN limitations and restrictive rules of engagement cannot be expected to produce the kind of decisive results we like to associate with victory. If policymakers cannot make the adjustments necessary to allow the military to be successful in operations other than war, then they need to lower their expectations and communicate them clearly to the public. It is not in the American tradition to accept prolonged, inconclusive, and frustrating missions for its soldiers. Our government needs to educate the public about what can be realistically expected of UN collective security missions. It is not the Army’s responsibility to educate a frustrated public on the more limited measure of success in these missions.

Reducing expectations at all these levels may seem an overly simplistic approach. Yet unrealistic expectations are often the cause of misunderstanding.
and apprehension between soldiers and their officers, between those officers and the Army, between the Army and the government, and between the government and the nation. There are no easy solutions for soldiers in today’s ambitious UN collective security operations. To think otherwise is folly. The United States can protect its soldiers, its Army, and its interests by revising its expectations, and by employing force wisely. However, it cannot achieve the comprehensive solution so sought-after in the American tradition in crises such as those in the Balkans, Somalia, and Cambodia. “Winning” must be redefined.

*Playing With the Small Cards*

In years past, Cold War tensions kept most UN collective security missions on the periphery, allowing no mission to distinguish itself as a great military or political triumph. The absence of those tensions today has led the UN to become ambitious, greatly increasing the number, size, and scope of its operations. Superpower status still allows the United States to stand above the fray somewhat, but it will increasingly be involved in these missions—and the nation will not always be cast in the leading role it has played in the past. These operations, involving military forces but not necessarily military operations, still rely on the cooperation of the belligerents as their main component for success. Whether the operation is successful or not—or dangerous or not—the UN forces have limited choice in the matter. The fate of these ambitious undertakings is still chiefly in the hands of the Khmer Rouges, Serbian partisans, and Somali warlords of the world.

UN collective security missions have worthy goals—there can hardly be much doubt about that. The Secretary General’s *Agenda for Peace* anticipates the use of military force to meet its objectives. The United States must acknowledge that the nature of these operations imposes restraints on the participating military forces, and that its own highly trained service members will increasingly be used in these handicapped roles. Either the rules of UN collective security must change to allow a military operation to forcefully impose a solution on belligerents (as in the Gulf War) or the United States will have to redefine its expectations when its forces are involved. Since the former seems unlikely, the latter is the more realistic course.

The United States has a long history of fighting limited wars. The learning curve for American armed forces has been painful at times. What has emerged from the traumas of Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, the Gulf, and other conflicts is a fundamental understanding of the effective use of force in the world today. The United States has discovered that its forces are best used to attain a clearly delineated and conclusive goal, one which leads to a meaningful political conclusion for the nation. In setting this goal, the nation establishes parameters which do not handicap the military’s effectiveness, but allow it to retain the initiative and thus quickly achieve an overwhelming advantage over the enemy. When the nation can balance its strategy in this
fashion, it not only protects its service members, but force becomes extremely effective as a policy option. Collective security missions will rarely permit us such freedom of action.

Sir Brian Urquhart, former Under-Secretary General of the UN, spent decades in service to the United Nations in the field of collective security. The experience left him with no illusions on the subject. In a recent interview he said, "Reason, justice, and compassion are small cards to play in the world of politics, whether international, national, or trivial, but someone has to go on playing them." In much the same way, America's Army now has smaller cards to play in UN collective security missions than in the Gulf War. And while it has recently revised its doctrine to avoid being caught without a full deck, it can avoid the distress of being forced to play the small cards by recognizing most clearly the rules of the new game.

NOTES

4. Ibid., p. 4.
8. Ibid., p. 13-6.
10. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. The symbolic use of American security services is not limited to ground forces; the possible use of Air Force and Navy air strikes in Bosnia evokes Vietnam's Rolling Thunder air campaign (as compared to "Instant Thunder" in Desert Storm). A European policymakers was recently quoted as saying that European Commonwealth politicians would like to carefully measure American air strikes in Bosnia, to "encourage the Bosnian Muslims to believe that the West will protect a deal they accept." Since the UN does not seek to impose a decisive solution on the factions, no mention of operational considerations is needed. The purpose of the UN forces is to signal the somewhat transient and enigmatic will of the international community. The Balkans crisis has shown how fragile, if not transitory, each expression of will can be.