



UNITED NATIONS – IS IT EFFECTIVE?

Forty-nine years ago this month (June 26), the UN Charter was signed in San Francisco by fifty countries. A primary goal of its founders was to eliminate war as a way of settling conflicts—the charter states that the UN's purposes are to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.

Since 1945, UN membership has grown to 184 nations. During this same period, there have been 149 wars and a total of 23,142,000 people killed in them—representing a population almost the size of Canada's today. On an average yearly basis, the number of war deaths in this period has been more than double the deaths in the 19th century and seven times greater than in the 18th century. (Ruth Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures*, 1993, World Priorities, Washington, D.C.) This month's Special Report explores the issues surrounding the future of the United Nations in its role as policeman of the world.

Read the following article and explain the effectiveness of the United Nations.

All parties to a conflict must be involved in the search for a settlement.

In November 1993, a UN peacekeeping force pulled out of Cambodia following the successful completion of its mission there. The UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) had not only conducted a surprisingly fair and representative election, it had also overseen the disarming of previously hostile factions and the establishment of a coalition government.

In contrast, four months later in March 1994, U.S. troops assigned to the UN mission in Somalia (UNISOM II) departed, along with contingents from most other Western nations. Here, the peacekeepers were withdrawing from a failed operation: Mogadishu had never attained real respite from civil unrest, and signs of improvement in other parts of the country proved to be short-lived.

Charged with similar missions but resulting in contrasting outcomes, UNTAC and UNISOM offer clear precedents for future UN peacekeeping operations. Each was dicey. Each situation could have gone either way. But in one the United Nations succeeded, and in the other it failed. Why? And what lessons can we draw for a much graver challenge: establishing peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Cambodia and Somalia

The UN operations in Cambodia and Somalia were both charged with complex and demanding mandates. The two missions aspired to help Cambodian and Somali citizens phase down armed conflicts, consolidate reconciliation efforts among warring factions, and rehabilitate their governments and societies.

Cambodia's conflict dates back to the 1960s, but it was not until the installation of the Pol Pot regime in 1975 that the civil war and civilian deaths reached acute levels. For nearly 20 years, factional fighting allowed no peace in Cambodia. Only after years of negotiations and an extraordinary amount of bloodshed were the four Cambodian parties willing to sign a comprehensive agreement for a political solution, which became known as the Paris Accords.



Under its terms, the four parties established the Supreme National Council (SNC), on which they each had a seat, to serve as the legitimate governing authority of Cambodia during the transition period. The SNC, in turn, delegated "all powers necessary to ensure implementation" of the Paris Accords to the United Nations, and the world organization created seven components to carry out its directives: military, civil administration, civilian police, human rights, repatriation, rehabilitation, and electoral.

The UN operation in Somalia was never granted such far-reaching authority from domestic political factions; it was imposed on Somalia by an international community concerned about the terrible human suffering resulting from the civil war there. UNISOM II nevertheless attempted a no less ambitious undertaking. In Somalia, internal turmoil had obliterated the government and governing infrastructure by 1991. Continuing clan and factional warfare, accompanied by drought, brought on mass starvation and created a humanitarian emergency.

A small contingent of UN forces deployed in 1992 with the narrow mission of helping to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid was unable to accomplish the task in the chaotic, perilous environment. As the situation continued on a downhill track, the United States offered, and the United Nations authorized, a U.S.-led international task force to secure the delivery of humanitarian relief by "use of all necessary means."

The task force made significant strides in accomplishing this goal between December 1992

and May 1993 and then handed the reins to a newly constituted UN mission-UNISOM II. Like UNTAC's charge in Cambodia, UNISOM II's mandate directed it to assist "the people of Somalia in rehabilitating their political institutions and economy and promoting political settlement and national reconciliation" and "in the re-establishment of Somali police . . . to assist in the restoration and maintenance of peace, stability and law and order."

Divergent paths

UNTAC's strength lay in the Paris Accords. The peace agreement symbolized the achievement of domestic and international consensus on how to bring peace to Cambodia. Initiated by Australia and other regional states, the Cambodia peace process took place over a period of years and brought in the active participation of all five permanent members of the Security Council to work out a solution that was minimally acceptable to all local parties.

UNISOM II, on the other hand, deployed without benefit of such a political framework. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and his special representatives, Ismat Kittani and Adm. Jonathan Howe, worked to bring the Somali clans and factions to some agreement. However, the existence of 15 separate players and uncertainties about the power relationships among them made this consensus difficult to achieve.



An informal preparatory meeting held in January 1993 resulted in the "Agreement on Implementing the Cease-fire and Modalities of Disarmament," in which the Somali factions agreed to cooperate with the United Nations in turning over their weapons. However, without at least tacit agreement on an underlying political solution, an agreement specifying the terms of the cease-fire could not be worth the paper it was written on.

A second key difference between the UN missions was the method chosen to deal with factions that acted in defiance of the UN operation.

After an initial period of cooperation, the Cambodian Khmer Rouge reneged on its promises of the Paris Accords, refusing to provide the United Nations with information on troop size and weaponry necessary for the disarmament process. As a result, the United Nations suspended enforcement of this aspect of the mandate. When the "State of Cambodia" faction used Khmer Rouge defiance as its reason for not complying fully with UN activities, violence escalated and, as the election period neared, attacks against UN personnel increased.

The Security Council immediately and strongly condemned these attacks and warned that "appropriate measures would be taken against those who threatened the safety and security of UN personnel and were trying to overturn the democratic process in Cambodia through violence." However, even though investigations implicated the Khmer Rouge in some incidents, measures were not initiated against the Khmer Rouge faction as a whole. The United Nations continued to seek to persuade the Khmer Rouge to rejoin the peace process. It chose to use political means, instead of military instruments, to achieve its aim.

In Somalia, the United Nations chose a different path, one that placed it on a collision course with a leading faction, the Somali National Alliance (SNA). Seeking to execute its disarmament responsibilities forcefully, UN troops came increasingly under attack. On June 5, 1993, 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in an ambush laid by the SNA. The United Nations reacted by calling for the arrest and detention of those responsible for the incident.

On the ground, this turned into a manhunt for the SNA leader, Mohamed Farrah Aidid, in a military effort to remove the main source of opposition to UN-sponsored reconciliation physically. The decision set the SNA on an irreconcilable path against the UN forces and led, in October, to the deaths of 18 American soldiers and, eventually, to the Western pullout without accomplishing the mission's goals.

Third, command arrangements in Somalia posed problems that were absent in Cambodia. With no intention of enforcing a settlement militarily, UNTAC could be governed with a unity of command that made possible coherent policies and effective operations. The consensus that held the mission together would have broken down if this route had not been followed. If nothing else, China, a supporter of the Khmer Rouge, strongly backed the UN operation as it stood, but it would have dissented from using force and could have doomed the mission to failure.

UNISOM II, on the other hand, was prepared to enforce its mandate through the use of an associated Quick Reaction Force of U.S. troops that were not part of the UN command. Problems cropped up on two levels. The lack of coordination between the separate U.S. Quick Reaction Force and the national contingents under UN command was partially at fault for the tragedy in October. Within the UN command, moreover, the Italians and others preferred diplomatic means to cope with resistance to UN activities and on several occasions acted unilaterally, with disruptive effects on the United Nations' strategy.

Lessons for Bosnia-Herzegovina

Since 1991, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has attempted to deal with the breakup of the Yugoslav republic and the resulting conflict among three main factions. In Croatia, UNPROFOR focuses on halting the spread of conflict resulting from the declaration by Croatian Serbs of an independent state named Krajina. In Macedonia, UNPROFOR hopes to deter the opening of hostilities potentially involving Serbs, Greeks, and Albanians. But it is the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina that has been the most tragic. Here, tripartite war among Serbs,

Croats, and Muslims has led to atrocities and humanitarian tragedies of dreadful proportions.

In its current form, the UN operation in Bosnia is more similar to the operation in Somalia than to Cambodia, and, accordingly, contains the potential for similar problems. At the time of this writing, the political consensus for a settlement in Bosnia, and for the successful implementation of the UN mandate, had not yet been reached. Relief convoys have been repeatedly blocked from reaching their destinations. Safe havens, established purposely to offer civilians protection from the conflict, have been attacked. After the most recent violation, a Serb offensive against the safe haven at Gorazde, the United Nations responded through NATO with close air support to protect UN personnel.

Like the unfolding of events in Somalia, the Bosnian situation points out the difficulties of operating effectively in an environment that is not yet ready for peace. The United States has deployed troops as part of the Macedonian deterrent force, but its position vis--vis Bosnia is more cautious. The Clinton administration has stated that it will not deploy U.S. forces in Bosnia until a peace settlement is reached. Based on the Somalia precedent, this appears to be a sensible choice.

As recent events demonstrate, however, as in Cambodia, the United States and other big powers could play an important role in bringing about such a political settlement. NATO nations first took steps to coerce Serb compliance with past resolutions when the shelling of the Sarajevo market resulted in 68 deaths in February. Russia's complementary decision to send troops to protect the interests of its traditional Slavic allies, coupled with the UN-brokered ceasefire and weapons control agreements, provided the Bosnian Serbs with reassurance and a face-saving outlet as they complied with the ultimatum. This cooperation was jeopardized when Russia was not informed of the NATO actions around Gorazde, a communication lapse that should be avoided in the future.

In Bosnia, the United States and Russia can play roles similar to those played by the patrons of the Cambodian factions. Their respective influence with the Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia can help to bring the conflict to a peaceful resolution.

Peace cannot be forced on the parties. This would only increase the possibility of ceasefires not holding. Conflicts have an internal logic that must be taken into account. Unless outsiders are prepared for a major intervention and the possibility of significant casualties among their own "peacekeeping" soldiers, conflicts must be allowed to run their course. Acting prematurely can be a mistake with potentially fatal consequences.

When UN forces do deploy, it is essential for the United Nations to seek to restore its rule of impartiality. Unless the UN Security Council specifies an aggressor and takes military action against it, all parties to the conflict must be involved in the search for a settlement. Otherwise, the likelihood of obstruction against the UN operation will increase.

Bosnian Serb forces clearly bear the greatest burden of guilt, by far, for the war in Bosnia.

The ethnic Serbs took the offensive in the conflict, rebelling against inclusion in an independent Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina; they were supported by units from the Serb-dominated Yugoslav armed forces. Serb forces have been guilty of unspeakable atrocities in Bosnia, horrible acts whose perpetrators should be punished by the international community. And, now that the Croats and Muslims seem to have reached agreement, the Serbs are the one party remaining outside the peace framework.

Still, the Bosnian Serbs must be brought back to the table if a permanent peace is to be established. While not officially having taken sides, the UN operation has lost all credibility with them. The only influence with the Serbs now retained by the United Nations is the threat to use force, and even its impact is shaky.

The Serbs did cease their immediate provocations on the two occasions that the United Nations threatened seriously or actually used force. But, after a brief lull, the Serbs continued their offensive against Gorazde and thwarted UN efforts in other sectors. These incidents seem to have led the Serbs even further from the peace table. Unless the international community changes course and decides that it is ready to enforce a peace militarily, the Bosnian Serbs have to be persuaded to take part in any settlement. The Muslim-Croat agreement will not be enough to secure peace so long as the Serbs remain outside the process.

A peace agreement involving the compromise and cooperation of all sides would place the parties on even ground. Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs alike must know what is expected and agree that the arrangements are fair. UN rules of engagement and actions should be transparent and should be communicated to each of the local parties beforehand. Such provisions should act as a guide to ensure that punitive measures are applied impartially, if they become necessary.

A third lesson for Bosnia from the United Nations' experience in Cambodia and Somalia is the need for unity of command. The confusing and delaying links between the NATO and UN commands in Bosnia, like the command problems faced in Somalia, do not augur well for success. Command arrangements must be clearly delineated and tactical military commanders be given authority commensurate with their responsibilities.

If NATO is expected to enforce the peace, it should be given clear authority to command all UN forces militarily. If the United Nations is planning to act collectively, on the other hand, NATO forces should be clearly subordinated to a UN commander.

The Bosnian operation is largely composed of NATO troops, so the inclination would be to rely on NATO's command structure. However, the presence of Russian troops in support of Bosnian Serbs, as well as the almost certain need of their inclusion in a reconstituted UN mission if a political settlement is reached, could spell problems for such an arrangement. As the Russian troops would be present to reassure the Serbs, command arrangements must be considered that could help avoid any independent Russian actions deleterious to the UN operation.

The situation would be breaking new ground with the possibility that the two major adversaries of the Cold War would deploy troops in a unified operation. The United States would prefer that NATO play the central role in command of a peace force for Bosnia. But any command plan must incorporate arrangements satisfactory to Russia or the mission could turn into another peacekeeping disaster.

Conclusion

The international community has charged the United Nations with an ambitious agenda in the past few years. A UN operation to oversee a peace agreement in Bosnia would ratchet up the UN responsibilities even more. However, the United Nations has gained experience in Cambodia and Somalia from which it can draw valuable lessons for Bosnia and other future peace operations. Taking seriously these lessons from the past, along with implementing reforms of the United Nations itself, could improve the world organization's ability to contribute to a more peaceful world and, thereby, to the protection of U.S. interests.

1. ANSWER – IS THE UNITED NATIONS EFFECTIVE? WHY OR WHY NOT?
2. EXPLAIN THE SITUATION IN SOMOLIA
3. EXPLAIN THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA