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This media is approved for the dissemination of material designed to keep individuals within the Army knowledgeable of current and emerging developments within their areas of expertise for the purpose of enhancing their professional development.

Peacekeeping:

Our Least Understood Mission



By Major Robert B. Adolph Jr.

Peace with all nations, and the right which that gives us with respect to all nations, are our object.

Thomas Jefferson, 1793

It was only in the last half of this century that American political leaders advised the military that its primary mission was the preservation of peace. This concept evolved after many years of using our military might as a deterrent to the then rising Soviet threat. Now that the Soviet threat is somewhat dissolved, deterrence can take its logical next step, that of peacekeeping. However, this is a relatively new role, and America's professional military had always been purists—they thought of themselves as warriors. The concept of deterrence, and especially peacekeeping, was foreign to the military mind.

Still, in the Cold War Era, the threat was clear enough. America's military was prepared to fight communism on all fronts. The idea of "containment," the brainstorm of a highly regarded foreign service officer, George Kennan, became the nation's strategic goal. The political gears in Washington shifted from tactical planning to nuclear strategic policy, and "bipolarity" was the catchword of the day. Of course, if deterrence failed, America's military would be expected to

fight. But this option was secondary.

The Korean Conflict taught us about the limits of military power, and the Vietnam War drove the point home with a vengeance. America discovered that communism was not monolithic, and that Korea, China, and Vietnam were not Soviet puppets. The newest catchword was "multipolarity"—the perceived threat became much more than just a military one. Economics, politics, ethnicity, and national and social issues mushroomed into prominence. The Soviet Union, in particular, was consumed with urgent domestic issues. They, too, learned the limits of power in Afghanistan. Smaller wars, civil wars, insurgencies, and terrorism have all come to the forefront, and all mainly in and from the Third World.

The Quest for Peace

Slowly, quietly, and without much fanfare, the quest for long-term world peace gained ground. The United Nations established its Truce Supervision Organization in 1948, following the first Arab-Israeli conflict. This organization had no historical antecedent. Peace as an issue had universal appeal, but no committed and organized world constituency. The nation-state system, historically adversarial and competitive and based on self-interest, had never before placed a premium on multinational supported peace efforts.

This changed after World War II. People realized that part of the blame for that conflict was the failure of the League of Nations. The newly created United Nations was unlike its predecessor in that member nations now shared a pan-national interest in maintaining peace. Occasionally, however, national priorities still outweighed peaceful intentions.

"Possibly, the most eloquent manifestation of our nation's commitment to world peace and security is the image of our professional soldiers as peacekeepers."

Remarkably, in 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the U.N. peacekeepers. They demonstrate how far the community of nations has come toward supporting peace. Comprised of military professionals from diverse national backgrounds, warriors trained in the art and science of warfare, these individuals, nonetheless, represent mankind's desire for peace.

For many of our warrior purists, peacekeeping is hardly a military mission. This is particularly true in the wake of Operation Desert Storm. Soldiers are often ill at ease in a quasi-political-diplomatic arena where there are few clear-cut objectives, no recognizable enemy, and no glory. This is a nontraditional mission soldiers seldom clearly understand. Aside from risking life and limb, the soldier's role in peacekeeping is largely symbolic. Yet, there are some contradictions here worth examining.

The Armed Forces Role

What is the role of the armed forces in this context? Is it the conduct of war or the preservation of peace? To accomplish the latter you must have the organizational capability to do the former. Our military must maintain its capability to effectively engage in warfighting. But, I believe, it is equally important to actively engage in peacekeeping.

Robert S. McNamara, while serving as Secretary of Defense in 1966, saw the issue in this light: "The plain truth is the day is coming when no single nation, however powerful, can undertake by itself to keep the peace outside its borders. Regional and international organizations for peacekeeping purposes are as yet rudimentary; but they must grow in experience and be strengthened by deliberate and practical cooperative action." The United Na-

tions has grown in experience. Today, U.N.-sponsored peacekeepers serve in the Middle East, Africa, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe.

The United States should expand its proactive peacekeeping role. This is particularly true now that the former Soviet Union is preoccupied with domestic economic and ethnic problems. In today's military doctrine, peacekeeping formulas are found under low-intensity conflict (LIC)—perhaps because peacekeeping defies conventional military thought and theory. Although the mission is primarily diplomatic, it is not associated with our State Department, and for good reason.

The foreign service doesn't train its officers to evaluate the military capabilities of former antagonists. Foreign service officers aren't qualified to project a military force's intentions and readiness, or to determine if they are aggressive or defensive. Foreign service officers aren't prepared for extended field operations or life in isolated outposts like the Sinai Desert or along the Golan Heights. Only soldiers have the needed skills and expertise and the will to endure such hardships, while risking their lives. Since 1948, 745 U.N. soldiers have died while serving the cause of peace. Some of those were Americans.

Obviously, peacekeeping is not a traditional military venture. And, because of its complexity, it doesn't capture America's imagination. However, from a strategic, psychological, and moral perspective, peacekeeping should be of paramount importance to our leaders in the post-Cold War period.

"Peace" is one of only a few words that translates with universal appeal in all languages. Peace is the fervent desire of people all over the globe. Does this mean peace at any price? Certainly not. However, relative peace within a democratic framework is a reachable goal. This is particularly true today as the world watches the halting steps of the Commonwealth of Independent States toward democratic freedoms.

As the likelihood of superpower conflict recedes, many regional conflicts continue unabated. By necessity, our military is going to become more politicized. Possibly, the most eloquent manifestation of our nation's commitment to world peace and security is the image of our professional soldiers as peacekeepers.

The U.N. Role

Some Americans may view the United Nations as impotent. However, beyond U.S. borders, it is often seen as a savior. For many small nations, the United Nations is an equalizer in negotiations with

their more powerful neighbors. Currently, the United Nations is the only international body able to mediate Third World disputes. America must not only support peacekeeping operations, but should "up the ante" and make world peace a national priority.

As former President Richard M. Nixon pointed out in 1971, "It is not enough just to be for peace. The point is what can we do about it." A few years ago, the United States, working with the United Nations, played a key role in negotiations between South Africa, Cuba, and Angola. The result of these negotiations was the establishment of the independent nation of Namibia. The United Nations also gave President Bush the support he needed to bring Saddam Hussein to heel in the Persian Gulf. The United Nations is the center stage from which the United States can lead the peacekeeping effort.

Limited peacekeeping operations are sometimes conducted without the United Nations. For example, at the present time, the Multinational Peacekeeping and Observer Force is arrayed in the Sinai Desert between Israel and Egypt. This force emerged from the Camp David Accords which the United States brokered. In addition, both the Arab League and the Organization of American States have attempted to keep peace between warring factions. Nevertheless, the United Nations is the only organization with the international legitimacy to conduct these activities with any reasonable hope of success.

Military officers from dozens of nations work side by side in the Middle East while serving with the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization. Could this be the precursor of future combined efforts to establish peace as the global norm? We must work with the new Commonwealth of Independent States toward this end. Activities such as the jointly sponsored Arab-Israeli peace conference have set the precedent for mutual trust and constructive action.

The U.S. Proactive Role

President Franklin D. Roosevelt saw the problem clearly in 1937 when he pointed out: "The will for peace on the part of peace-loving nations must express itself to the end that nations that may be tempted to violate their agreements and the rights of others will desist from such a course. There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace." There is no more positive endeavor than to engage actively in peacekeeping.

There are also moral imperatives that should drive America's expanding peacekeeping role. They are the democratic principles we have always espoused as a nation, but have had difficulty put-

ting into practice internationally. Obstacles to peace have not totally disappeared. They're now mainly economic, political, and psychological. Of the three, the psychological component is most often overlooked, yet, it well may be the most important.

In the age of symbols, the peace symbol may be the most powerful of all. Peace is first among equals. After peace is established, political dialogue is possible to work toward the general welfare. U.S. peacekeeping efforts will prove to be the most powerful tool to bring about global peace. It may not happen in our lifetime, but it is a goal worthy of committed pursuit. A proactive approach will place America at the forefront of this pursuit.

President Bush's call for a "new world order" gives the American military a leading role beyond its traditional missions. Peacekeeping may become the chief occupation of the U.S. armed forces. If it's true that our military's responsibility is peace, then expanding our role in a global peacekeeping effort is a moral imperative for the world's most powerful democracy.

A Short Peacekeeping Course

Peacekeeping operations require the consent and support of all parties engaged in the conflict. A portion of the international community must recognize the legitimacy of the peacekeeping effort.

- ☐ The demands of the mission mandate must be both clear and realistic.
- ☐ The peacekeepers must have enough freedom of movement to perform their mandated function.
- ☐ There must be a clear-cut command, control, and communications system established.
- ☐ The peacekeeping forces or observers must be impartial.
- ☐ United States support to peacekeeping is authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.
- ☐ The United States participates in U.N. peacekeeping by virtue of the United Nations Participation Act of 1945 and Executive Order 10206, Support of Peaceful Settlements of Disputes.

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