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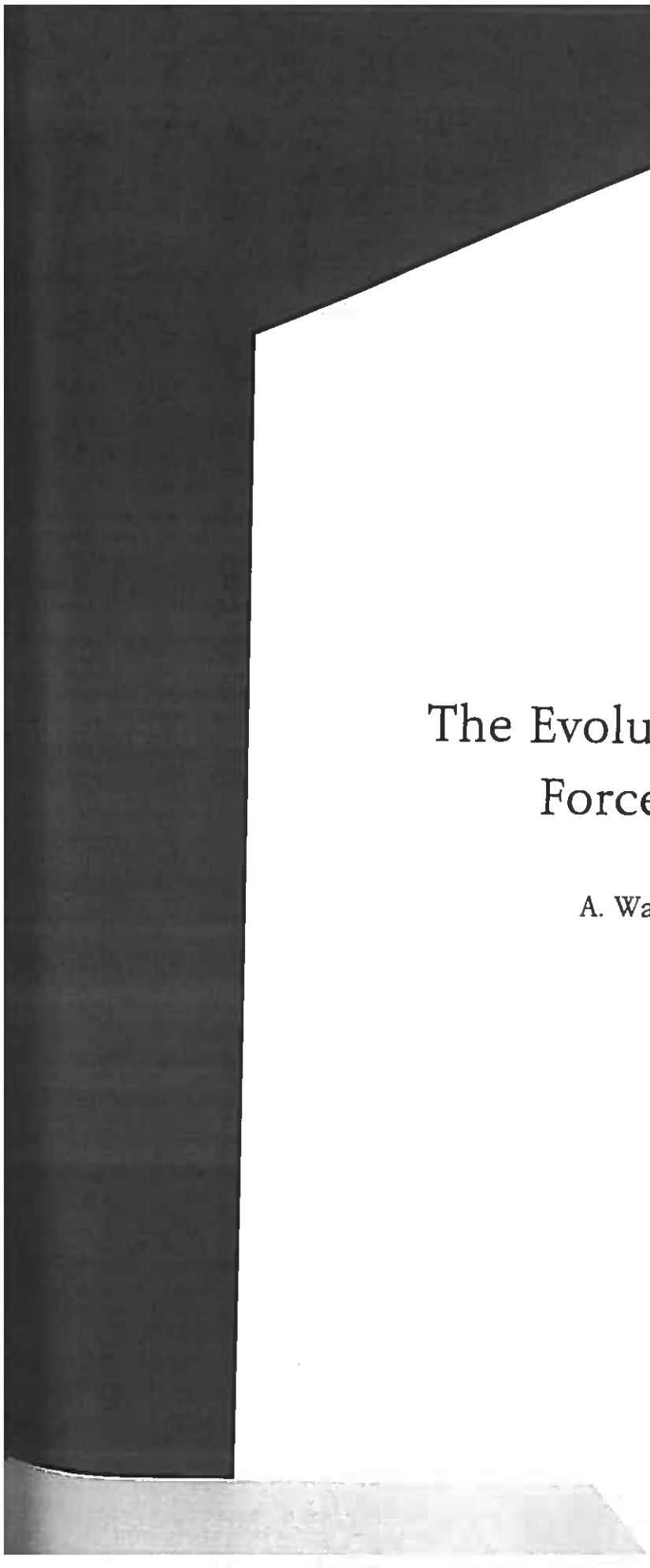

The Evolution of the Use of Force in Peacekeeping

A. Walter Dorn and H. Peter Langille

ABSTRACT

The use of force is a continuing dilemma for UN peacekeeping missions and for the troop-contributing countries. How to use force while not becoming party to a conflict? This paper provides a chronological review of the UN's operational experience in the use and non-use of force, showing the benefits and drawbacks of both. It highlights the period of crisis in the mid-1990s, when the UN could not summon the political will or the means to use the required force in the face of crises in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda. But, after absorbing these painful lessons, the United Nations showed in the new century it could use force in Sierra Leone, D.R. Congo, Haiti, and the Central African Republic. In all of the Africa cases, attack helicopters played a major role in robust peacekeeping. The helicopters not only provide mobility for rapid access, but also protection, close air support, a deterrent and a unique force multiplier. As such, they earn the designation of 'key enabler' - one that the United Nations is chronically short of and which warrants further provision and support from Member States. This paper provides insights into the diverse challenges, expectations and requirements for use of force. At the same time, it discusses the concerns caused by the shift to peace enforcement. This paradigm shift must be handled well if the United Nations is to move from a reactive to a pro-active approach and to make a long overdue shift from post-conflict stabilization to the prevention of conflict.

The Evolution of the Use of Force in Peacekeeping

A. Walter Dorn and H. Peter Langille

Introduction

The environments of modern peacekeeping operations are often characterized by the presence of militias, criminal gangs, and other spoilers who actively seek to undermine the peace process or pose a threat to the peacekeepers, peacebuilders and the civilian population. With globalization and new forms of war, belligerents often have access to markets supplying advanced weapons. UN peacekeepers should not be at a comparative disadvantage in areas where they operate, especially as illegal forces may attack both the peacekeepers and civilians.

The United Nations has acquired considerable experience in the use of force for peacekeeping. At the end of the Cold War, the Organisation managed a difficult shift from the traditional interpositional operations between two conflicting states to multidimensional operations characterized by the pursuit of comprehensive peace agreements to resolve internal conflicts, with elements of humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians (POC), prevention and peace enforcement.

Corresponding shifts were also needed in the use of force. From a near-consensus on traditional peacekeeping in the early years that force was limited to self-defence,

more challenging circumstances prompted the use of force in defence of the mandate, which later expanded to ambitious mandates like POC. Recent precedents also suggest that when force is used by rebel groups and spoilers against both civilians and UN operations, the United Nations may designate targets and use offensive force, while still allowing targeted groups to be part of negotiations and the peace process.

Since 1999, there has been an accompanying shift from operations authorized under Chapter VI to an emphasis on Chapter VII, with all necessary means.

For over a decade, the United Nations has benefitted from sophisticated doctrine and guidelines, as well as explicit policy on the use of force in peace operations. Officials have struggled to ensure a robust deterrent capacity in modern UN peace operations. On a few occasions, however, sufficient capacity has been provided by member states. Frequently, such capacity has been direly needed, but unavailable. The recurring phenomena of 'too-little too-late' has diminished wider confidence in the Organization. Seldom has the use of force been deliberately misused, abused or indiscriminately applied in UN peace operations. Rather it is the non-use of force that caused outrage. Local civilians often wonder (and complain) how the UN forces have so many superior weapons and vehicles but use them so infrequently. UN peacekeepers have even been taken hostage without a fight (e.g., Bosnia in 1995, Sierra Leone in 2000 and Golan Heights in 2014). Sometimes, they have turned over their weapons (truck load) rather than engage in combat. At the same time, UN contingents have experienced losses and fatalities in the service of peace.[1)]

An overview of the UN's experience with the use of force would prove valuable to further understand the UN's evolution and struggles on the use of force.

1) In 2022, 96 peacekeepers died in UN operations, brining the total since 1947 to 4,280. Of the total, 35% died from illness, 32% through accidents, 26% by malicious acts and 7% other/unknown. For UN statistics, see .

Operational experience

The early UN peacekeeping missions in Greece, Indonesia, Korea, Palestine and Kashmir only deployed peacekeepers who were unarmed.[2] The **Suez crisis** in 1956 pushed an idea of deploying armed peacekeepers into reality with the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). Within days, the core principles of traditional peacekeeping were developed to support 'impartiality, consent of the host nation and the non-use of force except in self defence.' This 'trinity' was promptly consolidated and it would endure for over 35 years of traditional UN peacekeeping during the Cold War, with few exceptions. When UNEF II was created after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the UN expanded the exception from self-defence by adding "defence of the mandate." But force was rarely used by UNEF II or any other Cold War mission, expect the UN mission in the Congo.

The **UN operation in Congo** (ONUC) became the Cold War's primary (perhaps only) example of robust peacekeeping. As the mission encountered armed resistance that pushed it into peace enforcement, it shattered the illusion that peacekeepers could not engage in the use of force. It also demonstrated the costs and consequences of using force in a peacekeeping operation that degenerated into combat and an arms race between the United Nations and the secessionist province of Katanga.[3] However, the forceful action allowed the United Nations to prevail and the Congo did not break apart.

2) Prior to the Korean War, the UN established two small peacekeeping missions in Korea: United Nations Temporary Commission in Korea (UNTCOK), and United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK). Shortly after the Korea War broke out, the UN Security Council created UN Command, which was a purely enforcement mission, designed to repel the North Korean forces. Naturally, UN Command was and is not a peacekeeping mission.

3) See A. Walter Dorn, "Combat Air Power in the Congo, 2003-," Chapter 14 in Air Power in UN Operations: Wings for Peace (A. Walter Dorn, Ed.), Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, UK, 2014, pp. 241-253.

With the **end of the Cold War** in 1990, the United Nations encountered a new turbulent environment under the twin pressures of globalization and state fragmentation. The demise of a bipolar order under controlled spheres of influence released grievances and struggles for power, particularly in ethnic and identity conflicts, which posed new political and operational challenges that the UN system was neither accustomed to nor prepared for.

For instance, tragic UN operations in the **former Yugoslavia** (UNPROFOR), particularly in Srebrenica, **Somalia** (UNOSOM), and in **Rwanda** (UNAMIR) humiliated UN peacekeepers, the Organization and its most powerful Member State, the United States. Without the mandate or the means to protect, the peacekeepers had to stand by as thousands of civilians were systematically slaughtered nearby.

The traditional principle of non-use of force effectively paralyzed UN troops in the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia, leaving many peacekeepers with the impression that UN rules had left them in the middle of a vicious fight to watch innocent people being killed while the peacekeepers had their arms tied behind their backs.

The **Somalia** operation demonstrated an initial worst-case example of what might go wrong with the use of force under different operations, purposes and contributors. With the absence of a central Somali government and factional fighting between competing militia forces, a nation-wide famine threatened over 4.5 million people.

At first, a traditional UN observer operation (UNSOM I) was deployed, followed promptly by a UN-sanctioned US-led multinational 'Unified Task Force' (UNITAF also known under the name Operation Restore Hope [1992]), and later a separate

American military mission (Operation Gothic Serpent [1993]). UNSOM I was soon scaled-up into UNSOM II to engage in enforcement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, with authorization for the use of "all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations…" (Security Council Resolution 794 (1992)). The operational objectives included humanitarian assistance to address a famine, restoring order in the midst of a civil war, ensuring protection of relief efforts and, eventually, the capture a Somali warlord. Confusion was further compounded by diverse mandates, chains of command, control, communication and rules of engagement. As the lines of each blurred, coherence, cooperation and deterrence diminished.

Belligerent militia forces lost respect. One group attacked Pakistani peacekeepers. In response, the United States used its operation to carry out an "international arrest warrant" for the clan leader. The Battle of Mogadishu in October of 1993 led to the deaths of over 800 Somalis and 18 American troops. Two US Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by ground fire.[4] Hundreds of innocent civilians were caught in the crossfire. The United States determined that too much would be needed to sustain the war against the clan. It withdrew its forces, and UNOSOM II was closed out shortly thereafter.

This battle would have far-reaching effects on UN peace operations as it led the United States and numerous Northern troop contributors to retreat from participation in UN operations more generally. President Bill Clinton's response in Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25 placed restrictions on support for UN operations that would have dire and near-immediate consequences for subsequent missions, particularly in Africa.

4) Aside from MH-60 Black Hawks, the American mission deployed AH-6 and MH-6 Little Birds, and Kiowa warrior helicopters.

The **Rwandan genocide** followed in 1994. Despite ample early-warning of a planned atrocity from the UNAMIR operation, over 800,000 people - mostly ethnic Tutsis and some moderate Hutus - were killed by Hutu extremists over a period of 100 days. UNAMIR had been deployed to assist in the implementation of the Arusha Accords of August 1993 to end the Rwandan civil war. The UN's initial plans were for a traditional peacekeeping operation.

In January 1994, UNAMIR informed UN headquarters of new weapon shipments and stockpiles, of intense hate propaganda, and of plans to commence attacks on the Tutsi population. UNAMIR's force commander, Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire, sought permission from UN headquarters to conduct offensive operations to stem the dispersal of weapons and militia training. In response, the United Nations ordered no intervention and no use of force.[5]

The genocide was unleashed on an unprepared world on 6 April 1994. After the early murder of ten Belgian peacekeepers and New York's reluctance to assume further risks or deploy additional troops, UNAMIR was weakened further by the departure of a primary troop contributor, Belgium. Worse, in the midst of murderous mayhem, with civilians and peacekeepers under attack, the UN Security Council reduced UNAMIR's strength in April 1994. From 2,548 troops, what remained was a small UN contingent, consisting of only 300 soldiers.

To its credit, the UN mission managed to save over 20,000 Rwandan lives at locations under its control or observation. By mid-May, the Security Council agreed to increase UNAMIR's strength to 5,500 troops, but they would require over six months to deploy.[6]

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5) For a brief overview see, Romeo Dallaire, "Author Linda Melvern's Intent to Deceive details the planned genocide of the Rwandan Tutsi - and subsequent efforts to deny it", (book review), The Globe and Mail, 25 February 2020.

6) See, United Nations Peacekeeping, 'UNAMIR Background'

After leaving the mission, Brigadier-General Dallaire suggested that he could have stopped the genocide in Kigali if he had been provided with 5,000 well-trained troops. This may may well have prevented the spread and escalation of killing that ensued. Yet neither the United States nor Britain on the UN Security Council would approve more flexible rules of engagement for the use of force or a rapid reinforcement of the UNAMIR operation, especially given the debacle in Somalia the previous year. Rwanda promptly became known as another 'UN failure'.

Meanwhile, Srebrenica in **Bosnia** had been declared the first 'safe area' under UN protection in 1993. Two years later, the Dutch UN battalion of UNPRFOR (which replaced the Canadians) found itself too small and under-equipped to deter or stop aggression by a far larger force of the Bosnian Serb army (Army of Republika Srpska & Scorpions paramilitary group). The UNPROFOR mission lacked a rapid response force to reinforce its safe area. The absence of a credible option to use force emboldened the Serb army to exploit their advantage and push the Dutch battalion aside to simply observe the killing.

The result was a massacre of over 8,000 Muslim Bosniak men and boys in July 1995, with a subsequent ethnic cleansing of women and girls, both constituting crimes of genocide. Srebrenica remains another black mark in the history of peacekeeping operations. However, the United Nations and NATO did respond with armed force and the tide turned away from the Serb side, leading to the Dayton Peace Accords of December 1995.

In 1998-99, a conflict over control of **Kosovo** initially escalated into a war between Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army. As diplomatic approaches faltered, NATO intervened with alliance air forces, justified as a 'humanitarian war'. A NATO bombing campaign, without UN Security Council authorization

(due to the threat of a Russian veto), forced a Serb backdown. It also prompted serious divisions in the UN Security Council, with Russia alarmed by what was seen as NATO's unwarranted use of force. A subsequent UN operation (UNMIK) was established to ensure conditions for peace and normality for Kosovars and to advance regional stability in the Western Balkans. Yet cooperation among the P-5 members would decline, with problematic consequences for UN peace operations, especially around the legitimate use of force.

Confronted by mass atrocity crimes occurring in a prolonged civil war in **Sierra Leone** and a series of coup d'états, the United Nations deployed a peacekeeping operation (UNAMSIL) in 1999. The primary objectives were to complement a regional mission of West African forces (ECOMOG), to help end the war and implement the Lomé Peace Accord. Each would prove to be far more demanding than initially anticipated. An earlier observer mission (UNOMSIL) was evacuated. Within months, the Security Council bolstered the initial strength of UNAMSIL from 6,000 military personnel to 11,100, then 13,000, then 17,500.

An enduring precedent was established within five months when the UN Security Council expanded UNAMSIL's mandate, authorizing operations under Chapter VII to take the necessary action to provide security and, "…within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence…"[7] Protection of civilians under Chapter VII of the UN Charter would be embedded in subsequent Security Council mandates for multidimensional peacekeeping operations.

On September 11th, 2001, attacks by al-Qaeda on the United States prompted the latter to declare a **global war on terrorism** (GWOT). Within days, priorities shifted.

7) United Nations, 'Sierra Leone - UNAMSIL - Mandate' (Security Council resolution 1289 (2000) of 7 February 2000)

Within weeks, political support and military resources mobilized worldwide. Scant consideration would be accorded to international organizations, international law or conventions regarding use of force. An 'axis of evil' (Iran, Iraq and North Korea) was cited by President George W. Bush and two punitive wars pursued (Iraq being added to Afghanistan). Both failed to achieve their stated objectives, but both prompted wider violence and massive suffering. UN peace operations would continue, albeit without substantial troop contributions from NATO members until 2015.

Confronted in 2011 by a humanitarian crisis in **Libya** - a socialist African state, accused of supporting terrorism and what was perceived as 'the potential for genocide', the UN Security Council called upon the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to cease attacks on civilians and uphold the responsibility to protect. With little assurance of compliance and fears of worse, the Council authorized a military intervention by the NATO alliance (Operation Unified Protector) under Chapter VII to implement an arms embargo, a no-fly zone and to use all means necessary, aside from foreign occupation, to protect Libyan civilians and civilian populated areas. This was a UN enforcement operation (to repel aggression under Chapter VII of the UN Charter), not peace enforcement, which occurs within the context of a peace agreement and is usually carried out by a peacekeeping force. The Arab League proposal for a peacekeeping force was rejected.

All-too-often violent conflicts that arose in one area would have a spillover effect leading to instability and further violence in the region. When the Gaddafi regime fall, many of its supporters returned with their weapons to other parts of Africa, including Mali. Civil war soon broke out.

A similar spillover had happened earlier in Central Africa, with the spread of conflict from Rwanda into neighboring states and throughout much of the Great

Lakes region. After the genocide, over a million Hutus moved into the Eastern Kivu region of Zaire, what is now the Democratic Republic of the **Congo** (DRC), sparking armed conflict in an area populated by ethnic Tutsis.[8]

Between 1996 and 2003, the combination of a civil war, famine and disease killed millions in the DRC.[9] In response to the conflict, the United Nations deployed MONUC in 1999. It was only after suffering early tragedies and losses, the United Nations increased its capacity to use force.

Repeated massacres in 2002 drew international condemnation.[10] An early shock stemmed from atrocities in the DRC city of **Kisangani** by the Rwandan-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebel movement who engaged in widespread killing, executions, rape and pillage.[11] UN peacekeepers did not succeed in stressing a peaceful resolution to the situation without the use of force.[12] Spiraling violence bordering on genocide also arose in the district of **Ituri**. As UN peacekeepers failed to stem the fighting in June 2003 a European Union, French-led Interim Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF) deployed 'Operation Artemis' to restore peace and humanitarian relief in Ituri and Bunia.[13]

Under competent leadership for a period, MONUC developed and trialed new

8) See United Nations, 'MONUC Background',

9) See, Armin Rosen, "The Origins of War in the DRC: How the region became overrun by warlords and lacking any kind of functional government". The Atlantic, 26 June 2013.

10) Approximately 60,000 Pygmy civilians and 10,000 combatants were also killed between 2002 and 2003 in an extermination campaign known as "Effacer le tableau" by the Movement for the Liberation of Congo.

11) "Congo: War Crimes in Kisangani," Human Rights Watch, 20 August 2002.

12) "DR of Congo: concerned over tension in Kisangani, UN urges restraint by parties", UN News, 16 May 2002.

13) "Congo Crisis: Military Intervention in Ituri", International Crisis Group, report 64, 13 June 2003.

mechanisms and innovative approaches to the use of force.[14] Yet this would not be enough to bring peace to a country double the size of France, with neighboring countries (Rwanda and Uganda) using their invading forces and later relying on numerous armed militias to exploit the rich natural resources.

In 2012, the M23 rebel group briefly seized the city of **Goma** despite the presence of 1,500 UN troops and 7,000 Congolese army soldiers based in the city. In response, the Security Council established a new precedent with a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in 2013 under the UN mission called MONUSCO since 2010. The FIB would be composed of regional African forces (from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi) operating within MONUSCO, with a mandate to carry out targeted "offensive" operations to neutralize and disarm groups considered a threat to state authority and civilian security. This was a major jump to peace enforcement with UN forces specifically tasked for combat operations.[15] The FIB managed to neutralize the M23, at least for many years.

The UN mission in the Congo probably used more force than any other UN peace operation, though still not enough to respond in a timely fashion to the numerous attacks on civilians in the "Wild East" of the DRC. But it did gain experience using force against Congolese illegal armed groups (IAGs), like the ADF, CNDP, FDLR, FRPI, and M23.[16]

14) See, Major-General Patrick Cammaert, "Learning to Use Force on the Hoof in Peacekeeping: Reflections on the experience of MONUC's Eastern Division", Situation Report, Institute for Security Studies, 3 April 2007.

15) See, Christoph Vogel, "DRC: Assessing the performance of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade", African Arguments, 14 July 2014. For elaboration on the implications, see, Scott Sheeran and Stephanie Case, "The Intervention Brigade: Legal Issues for the UN in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," New York: International Peace Institute, November 2014.

16) A. Walter Dorn, "Peacekeepers in Combat: Protecting Civilians in the D.R. Congo," Journal of International Peacekeeping, 26 (2023), 31.

Another case of a violent spill-over arose after NATO's air campaign to destroy the Libyan government. Initially, NATO's use of advanced air power was celebrated for fast, decisive results. Yet a subsequent UN Support Mission in **Libya** (UNSMIL) was provided with few, if any, means to stem factional fighting or contain the spread of conflict. It struggles to mediate a civil war and deal with external meddling. Neither NATO nor the UN had planned for the wider consequences, which included a flood of fighters and weapons moving South into the Sahel, and onto Mali and the Central African Republic. A volatile situation was briefly stemmed by the external military intervention of France. But their efforts would also be insufficient to stop the spread. New UN operations were promptly required in this vast region. Once again, they were slow to deploy.

The years 2013-to-2014 were pivotal, with a marked increase in the UN's willingness to use armed force. Aside from authorizing a force intervention brigade in the DRC, new operations in **Mali** (MINUSMA)[17] and in the **Central African Republic** (MINUSCA)[18] were also given mandates that verge on peace enforcement, with orders to use all necessary measures to 'stabilize' both countries. INUSMA attack helicopters fired on rebel forces when they threatened a town. MINUSCA used attack helicopters on numerous occasions, notably in order to protect civilians in the town of Bambari.

Attack Helicopter's for Protection of Civilians in CAR[19]

When fighting between two armed groups threatened population centers, the

17) See United Nations Security Council (S/RES/2164), 25 June 2014. . Notably, the priority tasks mandated for MINUSMA include: security, stabilization and protection of civilians; to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements to those areas; and to expand its operational coordination with the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

18) See, United Nations Security Council, (S/RES/2149), 10 April 2014.

19) A more detailed description (from which this summary is taken) is provided in A. Walter Dorn, "Crucial Technologies for the Protection of Civilians by UN Peace Operations," Global Governance 29 (2023) 245-258.

United Nations felt compelled to act. The Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) and the Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique (FPRC) were at war. The UPC along with its leader, Ali Darassa, was based in Bambari, while FPRC and its leader Azor Kalite had a stronghold in Bria. In late 2016 and early 2017, after numerous clashes, the FPRC moved to attack Bambari and remove Darassa by force. To prevent such an attack, MINUSCA declared a redline around Bambari—that was not to be crossed by attackers—and set up a UN temporary operating base (TOB) in nearby Ippy, which is along the road between Bambari and Bria. The UN also sponsored high-level talks with the leaders of the two groups to stop human rights violations, enhance POC, and promote peace, while at the same time declaring its determination to use robust measures to prevent attacks against civilians.[20]

On 10-11 February 2017, the FPRC moved a large attack force of about 300 men in a column toward Bambari. They were armed with automatic weapons (AK-47s) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and were assisted by seven pickup trucks on the Ippy-Bambari road. Their goal was to attack and sack the town of Bambari and remove the UPC leader Darassa. With this crossing of the UN's redline, the UN force sent an Mi-35 attack helicopter on 11 February to a location near the village of Ngawa (12 kilometers east of Ippy), where it observed and reported the rebels' movement.

After firing a warning shot, the Mi-35 engaged the armed convoy with rockets and machine-gunfire, destroying four pickup trucks and scattering the rebels into the bush. The UN action successfully stopped the rebel attack on Bambari and demonstrated the UN's use of force and deterrence capabilities. But the FPRC leader, Azor Kalite, accused the mission of favoring his enemy, the UPC. He

20) MINUSCA (UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic). "Daily Situation Report Covering Period: 9 February 2017 (0001- 2400)." 10 February 2017a (actually covers to 13 February) and MINUSCA. SAGE incident and event database, "C3 BAMBARI FO." 20 February 2017b.

threatened that, if his FPRC forces were not allowed to move on Bambari, they would "target MINUSCA staff, vehicles and NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] wherever they can." Kalite stipulated that "the only way to prevent further clashes is to remove the UPC leader Ali Darassa from Bambari."[21]

The UN mission realized that the continuing presence of UPC leader Ali Darassa in Bambari was a liability. MINUSCA had to act impartially and be seen to be doing so, even by the FPRC. In coordination with the CAR government, it requested Darassa to leave Bambari. He had been using the town's population as a de facto human shield against attack, and the UN could not permit the possibility of fighting in populated areas. To encourage his departure, MINUSCA made a strong show of force, surrounding Darassa's house and even positioned the attack helicopter directly above it.[22] Known as Operation Bekpa, the action also sought to increase the MINUSCA presence in the town and stabilize the security situation in case of pro-Darassa demonstrations, which were often fomented by Darassa himself.

The crisis was averted on 21 February, when Darassa announced that he would leave Bambari. The FPRC and UPC signed a cease-fire agreement on 9 October in Ippy, though both groups continued to commit human rights violations afterward.

FPRC leader Kalite was arrested by UN forces in May 2020, after his forces conducted a series of attacks against civilians and brazenly attempted to rush against the Portuguese Quick Reaction Force, one of MINUSCA's most robust units. He went on trial before the Special Criminal Court, established in 2018 to judge mass atrocity crimes in CAR.

21) MINUSCA. SAGE database (21/02/2017), citing "IPPY-BAMBARI/21 FEB (C3 MAURBATT FLASH REPORT)." 2017c.

22) Balla Keïta, lieutenant general, MINUSCA Force Commander, conversation with W. Dorn, Montreal, 12 June 2019; United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic." UN Doc. S/2017/473 (2 June 2017), pp. 3 and 6.

Despite some blowback, MINUSCA demonstrated in 2017 that it could engage in POC tasks and protect civilians threatened with imminent attack using Mi-35 attack helicopters provided by a developing African country. Not only were these helicopters equipped with effective weapons systems and defensive armor, they also had surveillance technology for intelligence gathering. Being deployed from Bangui, the Mi-35 had significant freedom of movement for several hundred kilometers and easily overcame the natural barriers that ground forces face, like poor and impassable roads. It was a technology that worked robustly and provided the United Nations with a key enabling capability.

MINUSMA and MINUSCA both applied force via attack helicopters to protect civilians, but the forces could not stop a coup d'état in Mali and the growing Russian influence in both Mali and CAR.

Evolving Norms on the Use of Force

This brief historical overview demonstrates an ongoing evolution with aspects of continuity yet distinctly different approaches, and some major setbacks. UN peacekeeping commenced with **traditional** peacekeeping: unarmed observation missions and then armed interposed forces as a form of international conflict management during the Cold War. Even with armed peacekeepers, the use of force was strictly limited to self-defence. In this era, nations frequently deployed forces rapidly to the UN operations, allowing the world organization to stem the escalation or spread of violent conflict - thus, limiting the use of force. Direct challenges and attacks on UN missions were rare.

The turbulence that ensued with end of the Cold War and the fragmentation

demanded a new approach. In response to the internal conflicts of the 1990s the United Nations launched more complex **multidimensional**/multifunctional operations. Initially they were deployed into brutal conflicts with neither the mandates nor credible presence to use force. With confusion at all levels, too many UN operations would be humiliated, bullied and pushed aside. The consequences for civilians were far worse. Among the innovative approaches trialed were preventive deployment, partnerships, peacebuilding, and humanitarian intervention. Gradually a broader term than peacekeeping was used to describe the these: peace operations.

Post-conflict stabilization and support of the state became central to UN priorities in the twenty-first century. Some criticized UN operations as reinforcing a neo-liberal order, even as a form of neo-imperialism.[23] Increasingly, the UN Security Council authorized operations under Chapter VII with 'all necessary measures' to deter attacks and protect civilians under imminent threat. Mandates also expanded and encouraged more robust use of force. The larger operations with heavier national forces and **robust** rules were often required to stay for long periods. The majority of peacekeepers came from the developed world, which was also bearing the brunt of the fatalities.

By 2013, persistent fighting and atrocity crimes prompted the UN Security Council to authorize a trial of peace enforcement, with **offensive** combat operations in the D.R. Congo. Robust peacekeeping appeared insufficient to make a difference in the toughest missions. 'Stabilization' operations were already being undertaken by US and NATO forces, and the UN Security Council adopted the term and the

23) See for example, Michael Pugh, "Peacekeeping and critical theory", International Peacekeeping, Vol.11, Issue,1, 2004, pp. 39-58. . Also see, Phillip Cunliffe, "Still the Spectre at the Feast: Comparisons between Peacekeeping and Imperialism in Peacekeeping Studies Today", International Peacekeeping, Vol. 19, Issue 4, 2012, pp. 426-442.

methods, including increased authorization for force. The Security Council tasked new missions with the protection of civilians, enforcement and stabilization.[24]

Overall, the United Nations managed to gain some success from its more robust posture, especially in the neutralization of the M23, though that group resurfaced almost a decade later with the active assistance of Rwanda. And the UN operations that are widely perceived as the worst - Rwanda, Srebrenica, Somalia, and Darfur- are remembered both for the victims and the failure to use force when desperately needed. But successful use of force was clearly demonstrated in CAR and DRC. So the UN seemed to have learned valuable lessons from the earlier tragedies.

Conclusion: The continuing dilemma

Despite the historical evolution, the use of force remains contentious, as seen in the numerous conceptual reviews of the UN's use of force.[25] This non-consensus over the use of force reflects the diverse interests, capabilities and experiences of key contributors.

Divergent perspectives over the use of force - its purpose, role and appropriate

24) Cedric de Coning, "How UN Peacekeeping Operations Can Adapt to New Multipolar World", International Peacekeeping, vol. 26, no. 5, October 2019.

25) See for example, Mats Berdahl, "What Are the Limits to the Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping?" in Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter (eds.), United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order, 2019. . Also see, Patryk Labuda, "How Much Force is Necessary to Protect Civilians?", Global Observatory, International Peace Institute, 24 September 2019.

practice - are also reflected within the UN System.[26] The use of force influences and affects each level of the system - from political, financial, strategic, operational and tactical - and may suggest a system-wide challenge, with no easy consensus likely to arise in the short-term. Even as some studies like the Santos Cruz report push for more robust use of force,[27] others are hesitant to rise to that level, including troop contributors fearful of the repercussions. Since consensus within this system usually comes at the lowest common denominator, agreements and operations often proceed with ambiguity and with individual leaders in the field deciding on when and how force may be used. Unlike in national or alliance military operations, the UN's headquarters has much less operational control over the actions of the field missions. However, the combination of precedence and clarity in UN headquarters guidelines and policies are helping to diminish controversy.

For over a decade, opinion was distinctly divided between proponents of robust force and those who viewed any deviation from the trinity of 'principled peacekeeping' (adherence to the three core principles) as problematic and confirmed as such by recent experience.[28] Others claim that, "UN peacekeeping was not designed to wield force, and the UN's permanent five (P-5), veto-wielding Security Council members do not want the UN to develop a military capacity."[29]

26) This system remains the sum of its parts, with the dominant part being its diverse 193 sovereign Member States, especially the UN Security Council, followed by the Member State Troop Contributing Countries', Police Contributors (PCCs) and Financial Contributors (FCCs). Central to the working of the system are the UN Secretary-General, the UN Secretariat, with related Departments of Peace Operations (DPO), Political Affairs and Peacebuilding (DPPA), Operational Support (DOS), Department of Safety and Security (DSS), numerous offices, as well as regional organizations and partners.

27) Carlos dos Santos Cruz, "Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business," 19 December 2017, ; see also Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Peacekeepers Must 'Not Fear to Use Force' to Foil Attacks, Report Says, New York Times, 22 January 2018, .

28) For an example advocating strict adherence to 'principled peacekeeping' see, Cedric de Coning, (ibid) "How UN Peacekeeping Operations Can Adapt to a New Multipolar World", International Peacekeeping, Vol. 26. No.5, 2019, pp. 536-539.

29) See, Lise Morjé Howard and Anjali Kaushlesh Dayal, "The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping", International Organization, Volume 72, Issue 1, Cambridge University Press, Winter 2018, pp. 71-103.

Understandably, disagreements are to be expected when UN peace operations are mandated to use offensive force against specified groups.

The UN's use of force in peace operations shares similarities to a double-edged sword: there may be advantages and immediate benefits on one side of the blade yet also severe costs and long-term risks on the other side.

On the positive side, the use of force can save lives and strengthen the credibility of UN missions. It may also help to stem the escalation and spread of armed conflicts. Even demonstrating credible capacity to use force may deter and dissuade aggression and abuse from belligerent parties and spoilers. In operations with the appropriate mandate, leadership and composition, the use of force is also essential to protect civilians.

On the negative side, there are inherent risks in the use of force. If unprepared and lacking sufficient capacity, the UN's use of force can escalate a conflict, embolden spoilers, encourage aggression and incur prompt retaliation. In the words of Sir Adam Roberts:

> The problem of UN uses or threats of force in connection with ongoing peacekeeping or humanitarian operations remains serious. They include risks to the UN's reputation for impartiality, and dangers of UN or related personnel on the ground being taken hostage [or retaliated against] ... Many events of recent years suggest that too direct an association with military force, which inevitably involves tragedies and failures of many kinds, could seriously undermine the UN's, and more especially Secretary-General's reputation and capabilities.[30]

30) Adam Roberts, "Proposals For UN Standing Forces: A Critical History", in Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh and Dominik Zaum, (eds.), The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 125-128.

Clearly, to use or not to use force entails consequences and difficult decisions. These may include allowing mass atrocities vs risks of 'collateral damage' (deaths of innocents), non-action vs crimes of omission or commission, performing mandated tasks vs retreating at the risk of operational failure, loss or gain of credibility and respect, and either diminished or increased support for the United Nations.

Further, there is no easy way to be sure of the short- or mid-to-long-term consequences in the use of force. What may appear as an immediate solution to a pressing need may lead to a worse situation over time. And, once used, lethal force is seldom an easy course to reverse.

Confusion and threats inevitably arise in the 'fog of war' where peacekeepers must operate. There is no easy solution aside from being better prepared and acting wisely.

Confusion can also be reduced by technology that improves situational awareness and the ability to act with more precision.[31] The emerging norm of Peacekeeping Intelligence is essential to provide early-warning and a clear understanding of the options, including preventive action.

The risks associated with the use of force will decline with the appropriate systems for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR). Unwanted casualties will also decline with better defensive and protective systems, as well as non-lethal weapons so the United Nations can move more deliberately along the spectrum of force.

Further, many threats may be offset by a credible, well-equipped UN presence

31) A. Walter Dorn, Keeping watch: Monitoring, technology and innovation in UN peace operations. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2011.

- one deemed capable of both defensive and offensive operations. This should enhance deterrence and compliance in a UN peace operation. But the appearance and capability of the use of force may create the need to actually use force. Prior preparation, with general and specialized training remain crucial.

Confronted by new challenges and expectations, there is wider awareness of the need for flexibility and adaptation. Experience has demonstrated the need for a combination of 'carrots and sticks': appealing incentives (financial aid and other support) as well as potential punishments (various sanctions) to support compliance with peace agreements and international standards. Along with force, an array of useful services are needed to encourage cooperation. The withdrawal of those services discourages non-cooperation.

At present, the use of force is encouraged as a 'duty to protect' when civilians are at imminent risk. Accordingly, with three exceptions (MONUSCO, MINUSMA & MINURCA), offensive operations are confined to the tactical level, where force may be required to counter spoilers and deter armed aggression.

The United Nations, despite all its flaws and failures, is learning and evolving, though non-linearly. The lessons of the past have helped to create better and gradually more robust peace operations, able to use force for the common good. Eventually, a standing force for quick interventions of the peacekeeping and peacekeeping kind should be created.[32]

As stated by President (and General) Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and cooperation can finally lead men [humanity] to the dawn of eternal peace."

32) H. Peter Langille. Developing a United Nations Emergency Peace Service. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.