
Keeping watch: Monitoring, technology and innovation in UN peace operations

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Foreword

Lieutenant-General The Hon. Roméo A. Dallaire (Retired)

I am pleased to contribute the Foreword to Professor Walter Dorn's important book on improving UN peace operations. These operations are much needed in today's world and are in need of constant innovation. Violent extremism, whatever its origin and wherever it raises its ugly head, is everyone's business. Peace operations have become one of the most important tools the international community has to achieve conflict resolution. We can no more abandon peace operations than we can turn our back on dying children in catastrophes or give up our hopes for a more peaceful world.

The past failures of the international community in UN peacekeeping should catalyse new commitments to peace rather than a withdrawal from UN operations. Rather than discard peacekeeping altogether because of its chequered history, we need to learn from its failures as well as its successes. The lessons of the 1990s should be incorporated into the current generation of operations.

Peace operations have evolved considerably and more resources are now dedicated to them than ever before. The annual UN peacekeeping budget of US\$8 billion is more than twice as large as when I commanded a peacekeeping force in Rwanda in 1993–1994. The number of uniformed peacekeepers deployed in UN missions has now surpassed 100,000. The mandates of the new missions are generally stronger – though still not strong enough. The Security Council explicitly requests its twenty-first-century missions to protect civilians, an enormous task that requires the use of robust force and detailed intelligence on all manner of threats.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1993–1994 showed the problems of a lack of intelligence and analysis in peacekeeping. We found ourselves working in an information vacuum, at times groping in the dark to identify and confront shadowy forces and unofficial networks that became apparent only after the genocide began.

Information needs to come not only from human sources but also from modern intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance technology. From hand-held metal detectors that are used to detect underground weapons caches to satellite imagery that helps paint the big picture, the United Nations needs to make better use of modern technology. It needs to be aware of the enormous potential of advanced technology to save lives and alleviate human suffering. To this end, practical studies and in-depth research are extremely valuable.

Dr Walter Dorn is well qualified to write on this subject. He has been studying the United Nations for decades. Because of his training in physics and chemistry and his leadership in the Canadian Pugwash movement of scientists, he is well acquainted with applications of science and technology. He has a multidisciplinary background and a depth of knowledge that are rare, even in the present-day era of technological advancement. He also has practical experience in field operations and, as a professor at the Canadian Forces College, is in daily contact with military officers from around the world. Moreover, as is evident in this book, he is deeply dedicated to UN peace missions and to the cause they serve. It remains only for the international community to summon the political will to act on the sage advice offered in this book, and to implement Dr Dorn's timely recommendations.