

# UN Peacekeeping Forces: Preventive Diplomacy and Its Limitations

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Despite UN peacekeeping forces' extensive activity in several conflict areas around the world, its abilities and effectiveness are limited. Furthermore, there is a lack of agreement and clarity regarding its legal and political aspects. The Israeli-Arab conflict has been the primary testing grounds in terms of developing the notion of peacekeeping during the Cold War, and stationing forces along and beyond Israel's borders has served as means of "preventive diplomacy." The end of the Cold War provided impetus for a number of peacekeeping initiatives and programs, though when faced with political realism and violent conflicts they did not prevail. Attempts to transform the troops into an intervening mechanism and type of defensive shield, using UAVs and other new technologies, are limited and indicative of the lack of agreement over the nature of the world order and the meaning of the collective security notion.

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It is an interesting and even paradoxical fact that the largest, most intensive and most expensive United Nations' operation is rather an innovative practice which has no legal reference in the Charter of the organization.

According to UN data from May 2014, approximately 120,000 soldiers and administrators serve in UN forces worldwide, deployed in 17 different conflict zones involving over 100 nations, operating at an annual budget

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of close to \$8 billion. Since 1948, these forces have operated in 69 arenas worldwide – 54 of them since 1988 alone. The total number of casualties for those serving under the UN flag has already passed 3,200, even though the forces are not defined as combat troops.<sup>1</sup>

The only UN forces mentioned in the UN Charter are troops designated to operate against aggressive nations and elements posing a threat to peace, operating as part of the collective security mechanism mentioned in Chapter 7. By contrast, peacekeeping forces do not operate coercively; they operate on the basis of a mutual agreement between the sides involved in the conflict. The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union inspired hopes of UN military troops' extensive involvement in conflict resolution. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote a document which was presented to the Security Council in June 1992, in which he recommended establishing an army that would be under UN command and ensure international peace and security.<sup>2</sup> Ghali's idea of a force constructed of soldiers from UN member nations operating under the authority of the Security Council and command of the organization's Secretary General was well-received, garnering praise in editorials of leading newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, which called the new creation the "new world cops."<sup>3</sup>

22 years later, one cannot deny feelings of disillusionment. The notion that an international coalition would form to advance the idea of international intervention under the caption of a new norm of "responsibility to protect" was unrealistic.\* The civil war in Syria, which to date has cost over 150,000 lives, turned approximately 2.5 million people into refugees and forced another 9 million people into internal exile from their homes (July 2014 estimates), is an excellent demonstration of the futility of both of the UN collective security system's roles: humanitarian intervention and the traditional practice of peacekeeping. The ability to intervene was taken off the table the moment that the politics of the Security Council brought about a face-to-face confrontation between its permanent members, as Russia and China cast a veto against any attempt at diplomatic condemnation of the atrocities perpetrated by Bashar Assad's regime. US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice used the sharpest diplomatic language in criticizing the "disgusting" behavior of the two "intransigent" nations, saying the Security Council was being "held hostage" by them.<sup>4</sup> The status of the UN

\* The notion became very popular in the literature of humanitarian intervention, earning its own acronym – R2P ("responsibility to protect") – in various written material.

forces in the Golan Heights buffer zone was undermined as troops were caught in the crossfire on the Syrian side. At the beginning of June 2013, the Austrian government announced the withdrawal of its troops from the Golan, close to four decades after the establishment of UNDOF (UN Disengagement and Observer Force).

### The Middle East as Testing Ground

It is interesting to note that the Israeli-Arab conflict, in which the UN has achieved little success in peace making, had served as a main arena for the development of UN peacekeeping forces. In fact, the UN observers in 1948 and the disengagement force in 1957 provided the inspiration for the peacekeeping forces. In the Middle East, as in the other world conflict zones, UN forces attempt “preventive diplomacy,” a notion that has no independent existence but can be an addition to ceasefire agreements, building on the interest shared by both sides not to resume the fighting. In 1948, UN observers were sent to the region to supervise the implementation of the armistice between Israel and its neighbors; following the October 1956 Suez crisis, UN forces were stationed in the Sinai Peninsula in 1957 whereupon the phrase “peacekeeping” was coined.

From the outset, it was clear that UN peacekeeping forces were an “improvisation” intended to overcome the paralysis plaguing the collective security system, preventing it from operating as envisioned by its founding fathers. Chapter 7 of the UN Charter refers to means of enforcement: “action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression,” representing the heart of the collective security system that depends on cooperation among the permanent members of the Security Council—the five nations granted veto power. Chapter 7 states that, when diplomacy fails to resolve a conflict according to the means delineated in Chapter 6, the Security Council can implement diplomatic and economic sanctions against the “rogue state.” Should these fail, the sanctions may be increased and augmented by a variety of military means, including permanent presence in the air, on land and at sea, under the authority of the Security Council. In the extremely fraught atmosphere of political and ideological conflict during the Cold War, and in light of the military rivalry and the nuclear arms race, the UN system of enforcement was doomed to recurring failure.

This deadlock created the need to circumvent the Charter's directives. Trygve Lie, the first UN Secretary General, initiated the establishment of UNTSO – the UN Truce Supervision Organization, the first UN observer force. The force was given the task of overseeing the armistice agreements' implementation along Israel's borders with its Arab neighbors. As Trygve Lie put it: "a small protective force essentially different from an attacking force."<sup>5</sup> UNTSO soldiers were often referred to, not without ridicule, as "soldiers armed with binoculars," though they rapidly became a permanent fixture of the Israeli-Arab conflict. To this day, they remain a constant mechanism charged with overseeing the implementation of agreements on the borders and assisting UN troops stationed in the region.

However, the essential breakthrough occurred when UNEF1 – the UN Emergency Force 1 – was established following the failure of the 1949 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Egypt and the 1956 Suez crisis, when it seized control of the Suez Canal along with British and French forces. Initiated by Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson and UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, the formula for the peacekeeping force was born. Hammarskjöld viewed the force as a vehicle of "preventive diplomacy" whose scope slightly exceeds the directives of Chapter 6, which deals with the peaceful settlement of disputes while avoiding taking extreme enforcement steps such as sanctions and the use of military force discussed in Chapter 7. Expressing the improvisational nature of the peacekeeping force, which has no actual reference in the UN Charter, Hammarskjöld called it the directives of "chapter six and a half."<sup>6</sup>

In practice, UNEF1 was a peacekeeping force in military garb, including homogeneous battalions of regular soldiers from different countries stationed in the agreed-upon buffer zone on the Egyptian side of the Israeli-Egyptian border. Its role was to maintain the separation of forces between the respective armies and provide a mechanism of impartial supervision of the agreements' implementation in regards to the ceasefire and freedom of shipping from the Straits of Tiran to the Red Sea. UNEF1 then became the model for all subsequent UN peacekeeping forces, providing the formula described by Hammarskjöld as a "paramilitary force without military goals."<sup>7</sup> This was also the birthplace of the peacekeeping modus operandi-stationing forces only with the agreement of the parties involved, adopting an objective and impartial approach, limiting the use of force to self-defense, and the involvement of volunteer nations' troops with the exception of the five permanent members of the Security Council.<sup>8</sup>

### Preventive Diplomacy?

UN officials do not hide their pride, boasting on the official UN website that the purpose of the peacekeeping force is to help “countries torn by conflict create conditions for lasting peace.” The website further notes that UN forces “have built up a demonstrable record of success over our 60 years of existence, including winning the [1988] Nobel Peace Prize.”<sup>9</sup> It would be somewhat pretentious to say that a ceasefire that generates an end to hostile activity without dealing with the root cause of the conflict can create true peace. Thus, in recent years, as part of the general trend of adopting openness and public penitence, the UN too had admitted the ineffectiveness of its peacekeeping force and, on several occasions, noted that its prestige has suffered because its “previous successes” have “raised expectations... beyond its capacity to deliver.” The frustration, as explained by the UN, is the result of its involvement in conflicts during the 1990s in which “the Security Council was not able to authorize sufficiently robust mandates or provide adequate resources.” The UN website refers directly to the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Somalia in which “the guns had not yet fallen silent” or “where there was no peace to keep.” The UN points the finger at “warring parties [that] failed to adhere to peace agreements,” and notes the peacekeepers’ lack of resources and political support required to complete their mission.<sup>10</sup>

From the outset, it was clear that UN forces not operating on the basis of Charter arrangements for collective security would be unable to enforce peace. This was decisively proven by the very first peacekeeping force’s task when UN Secretary General U Thant, Hammarskjöld’s successor, responded to the demand by Egyptian President Jamal Abdul Nasser and, in May 1967, withdrew UNEF1 from the Israeli-Egyptian border without even bringing the issue to discussion before the Security Council, as required by the UN Charter itself. The hasty departure from the Sinai Peninsula was a significant factor in the deterioration of the crisis that led to the Six-Day War; Israel’s fears and distrust of the UN were thus reinforced. As Foreign Minister Abba Eban so eloquently put it at the time: “It seemed as though the umbrella had disappeared just when it was starting to rain.”<sup>11</sup>

### The Responsibility to Protect

Towards the end of the Cold War, there was a sharp increase in the UN peacekeeping force’s activities. Under US leadership, the only superpower left standing, an agreement was reached allowing the Security Council to

authorize the establishment of 20 new task forces between 1989 and 1994, and increase the number of soldiers from 11,000 to 75,000. Some of the new missions in the early 1990s went beyond the traditional scope, expressing the directive of enforcement and the use of force. Troops were also stationed without the agreement of parties involved in the conflict. In some cases, the missions were very ambitiously defined, such as disarming militias (Somalia), enforcing the end of the conflict (in Bosnia, in conjunctions with NATO forces), and assuming all the powers of a temporary government on the road to creating a democratic regime (Cambodia).

Some of the objectives turned out to be impossible to attain. Furthermore, the UN demonstrated ineffectiveness in cases of abuse and genocide (especially in 1994, in Rwanda). This created an atmosphere of extreme frustration and accusations that resulted in a drastic drop in the deployment of peacekeeping forces in the second half of the 1990s. But after a short period of recovery, the number of forces continued to increase and hit new records in terms of manpower and budget. While the number of missions dropped, the number of those serving in the forces grew to 120,000. In some cases, peacekeepers were exposed to horrid behavior towards the local population, such as ignoring violations of human rights and even genocide, and stood accused of abuse, rape and human trafficking. All this forced the UN secretariat to establish a commission of inquiry, and several unflattering reports were issued, leading to stricter adherence to protocol. In most cases, the wrongdoing was not the fault of the peacekeepers alone, but rather the result of problematic direction and the lack of a clear interest on the part of the Security Council member nations.

The UN's failure to respond to humanitarian disasters and the appalling genocides in the 1990s paved the way to a new debate on the UN's role in peacekeeping and attempts to develop tools and goals that would meet the need for a more rapid and effective operative forces. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the UN issued a long series of reports, three of which stood out in particular. These were put together by teams composed of many former statesmen and experts who recommended reforms in the UN system of collective security and peacekeeping.

The first of these reports (August 2000), written by the UN team for peaceful activities, is known as the Brahimi Report (named after Lakhdar Brahimi, the former Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Under-Secretary of the UN, as well as, most recently, the UN Secretary General's

delegate to Syria until May 2014). It listed the flaws of the existing structure and called to significantly strengthen the military force, along with more realistic directives for operating the troops. While the report accepted the peacekeeping forces' traditional rules of conduct, mainly serving as a buffer between armies, it also stressed the need to recruit forces that could respond to intra-state conflicts in which "one side to the peace agreement systematically and clearly violates its obligations." The report recognized the flaws and errors of the past and admitted that "the failure to distinguish between aggressor and victim" resulted in severe damage to "the UN status and credibility vis-à-vis its mission to keep the peace during the 1990s."<sup>12</sup>

The second report was issued in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which was established and funded by the Canadian government in conjunction with the UN, in order to develop a response to the challenge posed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan: "If humanitarian intervention is, in fact, a violation of sovereignty, how can we respond to Rwanda, Srebrenica – severe and systematic violations of human rights that affect the image of humanity?" The commission developed guidelines for intervention by "the broader community of nations" in crises in which it is clear that sovereign nations "refused to or were incapable of" protecting their citizens against "disasters that could have been averted." Theoretically, one can say that this highly regarded team of statesmen and experts rejected the notion of the undisputed supremacy of sovereignty by saying that when a state fails to protect its citizens, it is the international community's prerogative to step in and use means of enforcement, including force, when necessary.<sup>13</sup>

In 2004, another prominent UN committee named "the global team for discussing threats, challenges and change in global security" discussed possible Security Council reforms, including the peacekeeping force. Though its report noted the new challenges, it failed to delineate any action points, limiting its recommendations to the establishment of another entity: the Peacebuilding Commission.<sup>14</sup> The report reaffirmed the notion of "responsibility to protect" raised in the ICISS discussions in 2001, defining it as "the new norm of collective responsibility to protect." It stressed the idea that when sovereign governments "cannot or will not" protect, it is the international community's obligation to intervene. This norm immediately received the UN Secretary General's approval and was later included in the General Assembly's resolutions (Resolution 1674). In 2009, despite the



bitter failures in intervention and peacekeeping missions, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon continued his predecessors' efforts and issued his own report regarding the responsibility to protect.

### Confusion and Contradictions

It is hard to object to the esteemed value of "responsibility to protect," though experts on international law have questioned its validity from the outset.<sup>15</sup> During 2013, even its most ardent supporters discovered that the international community had adopted a very selective approach to implementing the concept. Critics accused the UN and its peacekeeping force of being "in league with evil," and claimed that "despite the Brahimi report and the [norm of] responsibility to protect, very little has changed in practice." UN forces, as well as UN member nations, "have not understood, nor have they internalized the meaning of invading another nation and assuming responsibility for doing so."<sup>16</sup>

While experts and statesmen in the UN and elsewhere continued to pride themselves on the new international relations' norm, a shocking humanitarian disaster had fallen upon Sudan, Darfur. After a period of hesitation, US Secretary of State Colin Powell joined the critics and called attention to the horrors, accusing the regime in Sudan of committing genocide.<sup>17</sup> In response to the international community's failure to intervene in Sudan, human rights' experts, such as Samantha Power (who became the US ambassador to the UN) and Morton Abramowitz wrote in 2004 that the UN had become a "broken system." According to Power and Abramowitz, the UN member nations were engaged in a hypocritical and cynical game, as they understood all too well that the Security Council would not rush to act. By shifting responsibility for the disasters of the world over to UN institutions, they were "passing themselves off as good world citizens." Power and Abramowitz summed it up as follows: "Major and minor powers alike are committed only to stopping those killings that harm their national interests. Why take political, financial and potential military risks when there is no strategic or domestic cost to remaining on the sidelines?"<sup>18</sup>

As long as the idea of intervention operates inequitably, it cannot be viewed as a legal norm possessing legal status. Why did the UN intervene in Somalia but not in Sudan? Why did UN and NATO forces operate in Yugoslavia but not in Chechnya? Why did the Security Council allow Libya to be bombed but didn't even allow a condemnation of the massacres



in Syria? The selective approach is also evident in the total disregard of humanitarian law violations by Hizbolla, as by force of the directives of the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) mandate and Resolution 1701 of August 2006, it is prohibited from arming since it is not part of the regular Lebanese military.

### Stationing UAVs for Peacekeeping Purposes

At the beginning of July 2014, *The New York Times* published a report on the introduction of a new technological element into the UN peacekeeping force ranks: the UAV\* (Unmanned – or Uninhabited – Aerial Vehicle). UAVs, used extensively by Israel, the United States and other nations, were stationed and operated by UN forces with the agreement of the Congolese government in order to gather intelligence about the rebels in Congo. The UN also received permission from Mali and the Central African Republic to operate UAVs in their territories where UN peacekeepers are already in place. South Sudan, where a UN force is also stationed, refused the UN's request to launch UAVs from its territory. In Congo, the UN operates UAVs only within the country's borders; it cannot investigate how arms are crossing into the country or if soldiers from neighboring Rwanda and Uganda are coming in, as these countries have refused introduction of UAVs into their airspace.<sup>19</sup>

Since 2008, and with greater impetus since early 2013, UN representatives and peacekeeping officers began speaking of the right to use UAVs as part of the UN forces' policing efforts. It seems that the United States, too, pushed for the introduction of UAVs into the UN's operational service, in part perhaps because of the growing criticism of the United States' use of weaponized drones for targeted killings (in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen). As the talks began, human rights' organizations along with African and other nations expressed their reservations. Many relate to the concept with suspicion and hostility, as it seems like a cover for aggression and espionage on the part of the large, technology-rich (aka Western) powers.

\* From the UN's perspective, the emphasis is on UAVs rather than drones or even Micro UAVs because the UN, for obvious diplomatic reasons, takes care to note that these are aerial vehicles without either pilots or weapons – nothing but flying cameras. Five Pelican model UAVs, made by Selex ES, belonging to Finmeccanica, an Italian conglomerate, were stationed in Congo. The cost of the UAVs was estimated at \$15 million, a relatively small fraction of the force's annual budget of \$1.45 billion.

From Israel's point of view, it is interesting to note that in a Security Council debate in June 2013, the UNIFIL forces' commander Paolo Serra (Italy) expressed the need to bring similar technology to the Israeli-Lebanese border, so that his soldiers could more effectively supervise the so-called blue line (the international line between Israel and Lebanon).<sup>20</sup> As noted, despite the prohibition explicitly delineated in Resolution 1701 on moving arms to Lebanese militias that are not part of the Lebanese army, UNIFIL refrained from reporting transfers of arms from Syria to Hezbollah. According to standard practice, as demonstrated above, nations need to agree to the stationing of UN forces on their territory, but one cannot rule out the possibility that, in the future, demands will be made of Israel to allow UAVs in its territorial skies for supervising both sides of the Israeli-Lebanese border, other borders, and even as part of security arrangements along the Jordan Valley. As past experience has shown, even if the UN is incapable of enforcing security arrangements on Israel (as long as the United States has veto power) it can serve as a diplomatic tool for international pressures wielded by whoever steers the will of the majority of the General Assembly.

### Intervention Force: The Exception

There is disagreement among scholars and politicians about UN peacekeeping force's contribution and necessity. From time to time, the topic is raised in the US Congress, which funds about one-fourth of the peacekeepers' budget (completely separate from the UN budget).<sup>21</sup> One can certainly point to the UN's selective approach to peacekeeping missions based on global politics and the different characteristics of areas of conflict. While the UN had failed to intervene in the case of the Syrian massacres, it was able to strengthen its forces in Congo under a mandate formulated in the spirit of "responsibility to protect." In March 2013, the Security Council renewed the peacekeeping force's mandate in the Democratic Republic of Congo and, for the first time, provided the authority to use offensive military force. According to the Secretary General's recommendations and in response to the call of 11 African states from the Great Lakes region, the Security Council unanimously decided (in Resolution 2098) to operate "a military intervention brigade" that would act as part of a force of almost 20,000 stationed in the region. According to the resolution, the brigade has the authority to embark on an offensive mission – whether initiated or as a response – together with or apart from Congolese army forces "while

defending itself, and maintaining high levels of mobility and flexibility” in order to achieve “paralysis and disarmament” of the insurgents and foreign forces in Congo.

In the past, the UN Security Council used formulations that referenced Chapter 7 against world peace violators, such as the First Gulf War in 1991 (against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait led by Saddam Hussein) or the war in Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, in those cases it would be more accurate to say that the Security Council had delegated its authority to the United States, as it led the coalition of states that were willing to use “all the necessary means” to restore peace. In the case of Congo, it was the resolute will of the nations in the region to bring some relief to the horrific, ongoing war of many years – also known as the Great African War – that has killed and maimed millions. In the debate, Russia and China, which usually refuse to approve international community interventions, stressed that the mandate approval is not a precedent, but rather “a unique and exceptional case.”<sup>22</sup>

The peacekeeping force in Congo and the mandate given to the French intervention force in Mali by Resolution 2085 (January 2013) are the exceptions to the rule, proving that there has been no fundamental change in the large powers and UN approach to the notion of “responsibility to protect.” These are events taking place in the heart of the African continent in which nations are trying to confront internal and external subversion. China and Russia, the most adamant opponents to intervention in sovereign nations’ internal affairs, were forced to concede for fear of angering the African nations that represent the largest bloc of nations in the UN. For African countries, it is important to promote the initiative to fight the insurgents and mercenaries in the war-torn continent that is riddled with enemy tribes and failed states. Unlike Africa, the events in Syria demonstrate the extent to which peacekeeping forces revert to Cold War patterns of conduct; they are only capable of functioning as means of preventive diplomacy in buffer zones on condition of the involved parties’ agreement and at the behest of the large powers, and cannot touch upon the roots of the conflict.

Furthermore, crises involving obvious large power interests, humanitarian intervention and the notion of responsibility to protect are doomed to failure. Russia’s opposition on June 8, 2013, to the UN attempt to declare Syria a no-fly zone was fervent and explicit. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned the world against “a violation of international law,” thereby voicing

Russia's anger about the previous Security Council decision in which the peacekeeping notion and the principles of "responsibility to protect" were implemented by means of a no-fly zone over Libya, becoming the basis for bombing the state and collapsing the Gaddafi regime.

Moreover, it is clear that Russia wishes to revisit the principles upon which the peacekeeping forces were established almost 60 years ago. On June 13, 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed that Russian forces replace the Austrian force that had announced its withdrawal from the Golan Heights. After the UN spokesperson announced that this contradicted the 1974 Israel-Syria separation of forces agreement, according to which forces belonging to the permanent members of the Security Council shall not join UNDOF, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin responded by saying that "times have changed since the agreement was signed 39 years ago." According to the ambassador, UNDOF was in crisis and the Russian offer was intended to help.<sup>23</sup>

### Non-UN Forces

In several cases, due to the UN's inherent hostility towards Israel, negotiations between Israel and its neighbors have given rise to the use of non-UN observer and buffer forces. For instance, the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979 was brokered by the US, facing vehement opposition in the Arab world as well as within the UN General Assembly and Security Council. Following the Soviet Union's threats in the UN Security Council to veto the stationing of a peace force in Sinai, as stipulated in the military addendum to the peace treaty, Israel, the US and Egypt initiated the establishment of a peacekeeping force that would operate outside the UN framework (an option already formulated in the treaty). The force was set up using the infrastructure established in the interim accords between Israel and Egypt, based on the American force that was stationed in Sinai in 1975 in order to oversee and coordinate the initial stages of the Sinai withdrawal.

Following the signing of the protocol on August 31, 1981, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) was established. It was deployed on April 25, 1982, upon the official completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. The MFO supervises the military arrangements between the parties according to the peace treaty, and conducts patrols and periodic inspections. The force is led by an American commander stationed in Rome and includes 1,600 soldiers of varying nationalities, mainly Western countries.<sup>24</sup>

Another international force was established following the February 1994 massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where an Israeli by the name of Baruch Goldstein killed Muslim worshippers. UN Security Council Resolution 904 was passed in March 1994, condemning the murder, and calling for the adoption of preventative measures, including, among other things, the presence of foreign observers in the city. This was the scope of the UN involvement, as it had no further connection to its deployment and operation. The team of observers was called the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH). It was established in an agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and began operating in May 1994. Its operations were discontinued in August 1994, and resumed in May 1996. The observers, led by the Norwegian government, patrol Hebron and provide information to the IDF and the Palestinian police force. TIPH's mandate is renewed by Israel and the Palestinians every six months. It appears that mutual diplomatic interest has helped both sides overcome several incidents such as the murder of two observers by an armed Palestinian in 2002, rioting by Palestinians, and isolated altercations with Jewish residents.<sup>25</sup>

The European Union Border Assistance Mission at the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah), launched as part of the European Union's security and defense policy on November 24, 2005 serves as yet another example of positive international intervention via preventive diplomacy. According to its official website, EUBAM's activity was suspended in June 2007, following "the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip."<sup>26</sup> The EU mentions its policy of no contact with Hamas, and notes that in accordance with the authorization obtained from its institutions, "We will remain in the region with an operational capability to deploy on short notice." The suspension of its activity in the field led to a significant reduction in the number of forces, leaving 18 international team members and eight local staff in regular contact with the parties, maintaining a basis for the force's return "on short notice."

During the humanitarian ceasefire in Operation Protective Edge, prior to any meaningful negotiations, European representatives have suggested resuming the task force's operations. On August 7, 2014, German, French and British ambassadors presented their proposal for the Gaza Strip reconstruction to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subject to a supervisory mechanism that will prevent Hamas from rearming. The proposal included an international mechanism that would prevent the

entry of forbidden materials to the Gaza Strip, verifying that double-use materials, such as cement and iron, would not reach the hands of terrorist organizations. The representatives mentioned the possibility of reactivating EUBAM at the Rafah Crossing, alongside Palestinian Presidential Guard forces.<sup>27</sup>

It is too early to examine any long-term ceasefire agreement and its derivatives, though if a ceasefire agreement is formed it will inevitably revive the new-old diplomatic mechanism of supervised border crossings. Diplomacy, which is sometimes also called “the art of the impossible,” frequently succeeds in creating formulas and tools, even when it is clear to the parties involved that it cannot provide security, or even any degree of basic trust between the parties to a conflict. Even when the UN is unable to take part in an arrangement, as had happened in Sinai, Hebron, and the Gaza Strip, creative ideas for an international involvement are possible. At the same time, experience proves that just as UN forces are incapable of providing the means for enforcing peace, non-UN buffer and supervision may not be a reliable mechanism for deterrence and preventing security escalation.

### Peacekeeping Smoke Detectors

It seems that instead of being a means of enforcement in the spirit of collective security as mentioned in the UN Charter, the debate about the peacekeeping force increasingly reflects disagreements among the powers regarding the manner in which world order should be preserved. Security Council resolutions regarding central Africa indicate the very limited and selective implementation of the idea of intervention by means of UN forces. Debates in the UN reflect the fact that Russia and China are reluctant to increase the forces’ involvement. Nevertheless, they accept some limited compromises in order to avoid conflict with the coalition of African states that view the UN as means for maintaining stability and order an area riddled with revolt and subversion.

The experience accumulated in the course of the Israeli-Arab conflict indicates that peacekeeping forces are only effective when they are stationed as part of an agreement that exceeds the mere cessation of violence, even if only temporary. Such agreements, involving the Security Council as well, include other diplomatic and security measures that are used to maintain a deterrent force. At times, when the UN peacekeepers are joined by other

elements, they may be construed as trust building measures. In the reality of the Middle East, their presence affords a psychological element of stability.

Attempts to convert the idea of peacekeeping to “responsibility to protect” and a mechanism of intervention have proven to be unrealistic and reveal, yet again, the ineffectiveness of measures dependent on some vague reference to “chapter six and a half” of the UN Charter. The lack of legal clarity and political initiative cast another shadow on the credibility of peacekeeping forces as means of preventive diplomacy. Alongside some partial success stories, there is the risk that, in times of crisis, the UN peacekeeping force may fail even at the smallest attempt at issuing a warning about impending deterioration. Just as diplomacy does not always succeed in preventing crises and outbreaks of violence, so is a UN force liable to serve as a smoke detector only after a fire has already erupted.

## Notes

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- 3 “The New World Cops,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1992.
- 4 Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Session on Syria, February 4, 2012, <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/183334.htm>.
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- 7 Introduction to the Annual Report of the Secretary General on the Work of the Organization, June 16, 1959-June 15, 1960 *General Assembly Official Records*, 15<sup>th</sup> session Supplement No. 1A, (A/4390/Add.1).
- 8 As formulated by the former UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs Sir Brian Urquart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 198.



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