

WHY PEACEKEEPING FAILS



20th
Anniversary
Edition

Dennis C. Jett



Why Peacekeeping Fails

“Dennis Jett’s revision of his book on peacekeeping is brilliant. It incorporates the radical transformation that has occurred, since the end of the Cold War: in the nature of conflict in contemporary international relations; and, the phenomenon of the globalization, of virtually all things, including conflict within States. The unprecedented number of refugees in the world today (some 65 million) is its outcome. This book, particularly its early chapters analyzing the constructs this new world disorder, should be required reading at the UN Security Council and in other international organizations where decisions on peacekeeping operations are taken.”

—Richard Butler, *Former Australian Ambassador to the UN, Executive Chairman of the UN Special Commission to disarm Iraq*

“Dr. Jett is one of very few political scientists who have excelled as both policy-maker and academic analyst. This book provides a much-needed revision of his earlier, significant work, delving into cases in which Ambassador Jett was directly involved when he was a Foreign Service Officer (Mozambique and Angola) and analyzing additional cases that have emerged since its original publication.”

—Dan Caldwell, *Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Pepperdine University, USA*

“*Why Peacekeeping Fails*, which began to take shape in the first-hand experiences of an American ambassador who witnessed brutal conflicts in Africa, has grown into the classic account of the United Nations’ ever-evolving global peacekeeping role over decades. Rich in institutional history, it also never loses sight of the besieged people UN missions aim to save, often with mixed results.”

—Barbara Crossette, *Former New York Times UN Bureau Chief and Contributing Editor to PassBlue.com*

“I have encountered peacekeeping operations throughout the Middle East. Most, like UNIFIL, were organized by the UN but the MFO was organized by the United States. Dennis Jett has produced a well-researched and very readable survey of peacekeeping operations around the world. This book, in

my opinion, should have a place on the required reading list of any university course that focuses on peacekeeping, the UN and other international organizations or conflict management and prevention.”

—David Dunford, *Former Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman and Adjunct Instructor at the School of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona, USA*

“In this lucid, compact volume, former Ambassador Dennis Jett illuminates the usually messy, problematic, and too often unsuccessful world of international peacekeeping. Through careful scholarship, Jett examines specific cases of mainly UN peacekeeping since 1948, and shows the structural and contextual reasons why peacekeeping at best has a spotty record. A critical book for those wanting to look beyond conventional wisdom at the politics of efforts to create and preserve international order through peacekeeping forces.”

—Richard K. Scher, *Professor Emeritus, Department of Political Science, University of Florida, USA*

“Dennis Jett has provided the expert or the student sharp analysis based on deep experience of a very difficult and complex, but necessary phenomenon, U.N. peace operations.”

—Dan Simpson, *ex-U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Columnist for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

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Why Peacekeeping Fails

20th Anniversary Edition

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For Lynda, whose inspiration and support made this possible.

*And for the thousands of men and women who have died
while serving in peacekeeping operations.*

Preface

Two decades ago, after 28 years as an American diplomat who had observed the United Nations tackle conflicts around the world, I wrote a book entitled “Why Peacekeeping Fails.” UN peacekeeping has changed significantly since that book was published. There are five times as many peacekeepers and they now total around 100,000. Their missions are more complex and more dangerous than in the past. And, most importantly, in my judgment, those operations are now almost all virtually impossible to bring to a successful conclusion. The purpose of this revised edition is to explain how peacekeeping has evolved and why that is the case.

Today, the fundamental answer to the question “why peacekeeping fails” is that peacekeeping is a bandage and not a cure. It can lessen the loss of blood, but it cannot by itself heal the wound. But all too often, it is being used as a way to do “something” to address a conflict situation because other steps are more difficult or costly for countries to take.

The changes go far beyond a fivefold increase in the number of soldiers wearing the light blue headgear that signifies their role as peacekeepers, however. While some of the oldest of the UN peacekeeping operations have been in existence for over 70 years, the ones launched

most recently have confronted peacekeepers with new challenges. This book will lay out why the oldest operations are contributing very little to keeping the peace and why the newest ones face obstacles that are impossible for the peacekeepers to overcome.

The first edition of this book was written in order to examine the lessons learned from the success of peacekeeping in Mozambique and its failure in Angola at the same time. The United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), which lasted from 1992 to 1994, was able to keep the peace process on track and ensured the implementation of the peace agreement between the government and the rebels despite resistance from both sides. That effort helped the country hold its first democratic elections, which brought an end to many years of civil war.

At the same time Mozambique was succeeding, the peacekeeping operation in Angola had failed completely. Elections were held there as well with extensive UN assistance, but the rebel leader, Jonas Savimbi, rejected the outcome when he lost. The civil war resumed and continued until he was killed in 2002.

Describing why peacekeeping in these two former Portuguese colonies had such different outcomes was therefore an important opportunity to compare two starkly different cases. There was a good chance that opportunity would be missed, however, since, like nearly every country in Africa, Mozambique and Angola received very little international press coverage except for the occasional story about the horrors of their conflicts.

With the end of the Cold War, there would be even less interest in them because they were no longer battlefields on which the proxy wars between communism and capitalism were being fought. In addition, the media in Mozambique was entirely owned and controlled by the government, with the exception of one fax newsletter and one weekly newspaper. Local journalists were therefore not going to provide an explanation, and academic experts on either country's politics were rare and usually biased. In addition, the UN has always had limited enthusiasm for engaging in introspection and was unlikely to publicize the results if it did.

I had a unique opportunity for watching the peace process unfold. I was the American ambassador in Mozambique as the ONUMOZ

was conducted and brought to a successful conclusion. This vantage point provided an insider's perspective as I was one of the six ambassadors who were the international observers on the Supervisory and Monitoring Commission that oversaw the peace process. We meet at least weekly with Aldo Ajello, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who was in charge of the overall UN operation. To broaden my understanding of the issues, I also traveled to Angola and to New York to do interviews with a number of people involved in peacekeeping in both countries.

While some might consider it impossible to be an unbiased observer having served in such a position, and it would be impossible to be unaffected by such an experience, it did enable me to overcome the lack of journalistic and academic interest in the story and the UN's lack of transparency. As an international bureaucracy with 193 bosses in the form of the member states, the UN bureaucracy tends to be very self-protective. It does that by avoiding controversy, being opaque and being disinclined to engage in public self-criticism.

I also had an interest in examining the effectiveness of peacekeeping because Mozambique was not the only time I witnessed and participated in such efforts in my career. During my years as a diplomat, I had six overseas assignments and all of them involved either direct or indirect encounters with conflict and often peacekeeping.

In Argentina, in the mid-1970s, the country was tearing itself apart because of terrorism. In March 1976, some eight months after I had departed following two years in Buenos Aires, a military coup ushered in a new government that dealt with the problem in a way that was as blunt as it was brutal. It arrested people who were suspected terrorists, tortured many of them and dumped their bodies in the ocean. Somewhere between 9000 and 30,000 Argentines, depending on which estimate one uses, were murdered by their own government in that way.

Those tactics did end the terrorism problem and were viewed by some as a success. The debate rages even today, however, as to whether they were crimes against humanity or were the measures necessary to save the country from communism. The Reagan administration believed the latter as it covertly hired the same Argentine military officers to teach their techniques to the Contras in Central America

so they could use them to overthrow the leftist regime in Nicaragua. Because of that policy, the Reagan administration should have added itself to the State Department's list of governments that are state sponsors of terrorism. But the support for the Contras is another example that one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter.

During my second overseas tour, which was in Israel in the early 1980s, I took my first ride on a helicopter. It was a short but spectacular flight over the Strait of Tiran where the Gulf of Aqaba meets the Gulf of Suez. The flight was courtesy of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), an operation that had been set up, outside of UN auspices, to monitor the situation in the Sinai following Israel's return of the peninsula to Egypt. Another peacekeeping highlight during my tour in Israel was when the Israeli army invaded Lebanon in 1982, brushing aside the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeepers as they drove toward Beirut.

While in Malawi from 1986 to 1989, one of the more pressing problems in an otherwise sleepy backwater was dealing with the over half a million Mozambicans that crossed the border during that period to escape the civil war in their country. After Malawi, I moved to Liberia in time for the outbreak of civil war there and the subsequent arrival of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a peacekeeping mission that was formed by five west African countries and was a case study in how such a force should not act.

And as ambassador in Peru following my time in Mozambique, I was able to visit the Military Observer Mission Ecuador-Peru (MOMEP), a peacekeeping operation in the jungle on the border with Ecuador. It was also not a UN effort. Composed of a small number of military officers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the USA, it was brought to an end when the presidents of the two countries signed a peace agreement that allowed both to claim victory in this territorial dispute.

The territory in question was a small, remote, and insignificant patch of uninhabited jungle. Nonetheless, politicians in both countries passionately argued against surrendering a single square meter of it to the other side. They professed to be ready to fight to the last man to defend it knowing full well that neither they nor their children would ever have to serve in uniform. It would be career military officers and conscripts

that would do the dying if the war started again. And even without a return to war, there were casualties. One of the more memorable experiences I had during my time in Peru was visiting the ward of an army hospital that was filled with young soldiers who had lost a foot after stepping on one of the landmines that had been planted in the disputed area.

Despite the posturing of politicians, the conflict was resolved, however, and another memorable experience was watching the presidents of the two countries sign a treaty that settled the problem. The peaceful end to the hostilities demonstrated that, with the right political will and an innovative solution that allowed both sides to proclaim victory, diplomacy could succeed.

MOMEPA provided one other lesson. On the visit to its camp on the border, I remember a conversation with an Argentine colonel. He said the most frequent complaint from the Ecuadoreans and the Peruvians was claims that military aircraft from the other side had violated the demilitarized zone by flying over it. When I asked why MOMEPA did not acquire a radar set to be able to determine the origin of such flights and call out the violator, the Argentine officer looked shocked. "But that would violate our neutrality," he said. His reaction demonstrated that peacekeepers can view their role as being someone for both sides to complain to and that their job description does not include determining the truth.

During my final year in the State Department, I was a diplomat in residence at the Carter Center in Atlanta. During that time, I was sent twice to Nairobi to attempt to get Ugandan officials to talk to Sudanese officials and work out their differences so each would stop supporting a rebel group in the other country. The delegations from the two countries came to the meeting mainly to fulfill a promise to have such talks that President Carter had extracted from the presidents of the two countries. Neither side trusted the other, and the officials from both countries were just going through the motions. Those trips accomplished nothing other than giving me a better understanding of the limits of diplomacy in bringing an end to conflicts.

After retiring in 2000 to begin a second career as an academic, I made conflicts, and the efforts of the international community to deal with them, one of my areas of research. I also teach a graduate course on

the subject, which prompts me to keep up in the field. Participating in the working group on peacekeeping organized by the Folke Bernadotte Academy has also provided many insights.

This book will largely deal with UN peacekeeping. But as MOMEF, ECOMOG, and the MFO demonstrate, peacekeeping operations can be mounted by regional organizations or through ad hoc arrangements. The UN is, however, still the go-to international organization when it comes to peacekeeping and the one that often gets the most difficult conflicts to resolve. This book will therefore concentrate mainly on UN efforts at peacekeeping, but I will discuss the shortcomings of some of these other organizations as well.

This might be an appropriate place to apologize to the reader for all the acronyms that will be used. Bureaucracies love them because it provides a convenient shorthand way of discussing things and also perhaps because it makes what is being discussed less intelligible to outsiders. The first time one is used, the entire phrase will be spelled out. There will be a list of the UN peacekeeping operations and their acronyms in the appendix. And those and other acronyms can be found in the index as well.

As with the first edition, this book is written with the hope that, if the chances for the success of peacekeeping can be improved, it might help shorten the suffering of those who are affected by wars. Peacekeeping should not be used as a substitute for more effective action by the international community simply because it is easier to do and because it conveniently shifts the responsibility for any failures to the UN. To achieve peace, and to ensure that it lasts, the international community must do much more than just dispatching soldiers in light blue headgear to survey the damage. If it does not use all the tools available, then all it will ensure is that peacekeeping has little chance for success.

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Introduction

With approximately 100,000 peacekeepers engaged in 14 different operations, the United Nations spends nearly \$7 billion annually in attempting to create a lasting end to conflicts around the world. But those conflicts have evolved in ways that has made the work of the peacekeepers far more difficult and dangerous and greatly diminished their chances for success. This book will explain why that is the case.

In the first edition of this book, which came out in the late 1990s, the focus was on the difference between the successful peacekeeping mission in Mozambique and the failure of the one in Angola. The principal conclusion reached was that there were three main factors that determined the success of peacekeeping following the civil wars in those two former Portuguese colonies. The first, and most important, was the resources of the country and whether they were easily converted to cash. If those resources, like oil and diamonds in the case of Angola, generated huge revenues, they provided both the means and the motivation for the fighting to continue.

The second was the involvement of the country's neighbors, the regional and major powers and whether their interests were served by peace or by continued war. And finally, the political leadership within

the country and whether they really wanted peace or cared more about their own political power than ending the war for good.

Because the UN could not control those three factors, what it was able to do by inserting peacekeepers really only mattered in a marginal way. The UN could have an influence on them three, but could not control them enough to ensure success. And even that limited influence would be used only if the UN bureaucracy and member states had the political will to do so.

Today, peacekeeping and the conflicts that it tries to end have both changed greatly. At the risk of having to issue a spoiler alert, here are the major conclusions of this edition. The main reason the most recently launched peacekeeping missions will fail is because peacekeeping has become a way for rich countries to send the soldiers of poor countries off to deal with wars the rich countries do not care all that much about. The fundamental problem is that there is no peace to keep in these conflicts and the soldiers being sent as peacekeepers are incapable of achieving the goals that are being assigned to them.

In order to explain why this is so, this chapter will address what has changed and why those changes have made peacekeeping more difficult. It will also conclude with a brief outline of the rest of the book. Before describing what has changed, it is necessary to begin with a consideration of the terms that are used to describe peacekeeping and how a lack of clarity about them contributes to its failure.

Nowhere in the over 8900 words and 19 chapters of the Charter of the United Nations does the word “peacekeeping” appear. Since the organization was created at the end of World War II specifically to help peacefully resolve conflicts between nations, it did not take long for the UN to become deeply involved in peacekeeping efforts. The UN was only three years old when it began its first peacekeeping operation (PKO) in 1948 in Jerusalem. For reasons that will be explained that operation continues until this day, even though it is making no real contribution to peace.

Since 1948, the UN has launched over 70 more PKOs. Despite the noble and peaceful purpose of these missions, they have had their ups and downs. One of the most positive moments was in 1988 when UN peacekeepers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

One of the lowest came at the end of 2017 when 14 Tanzanian peacekeepers were killed. They died in a protracted gun battle when a group calling itself the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked their base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹ Their deaths added to the over 3700 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while engaged in the UN's peacekeeping missions over the last 70 years.²

The attack by the ADF was labeled a war crime by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.³ In a news conference, however, the Under-Secretary-General for PKOs, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, acknowledged that the soldiers who had been killed were not typical peacekeepers, but were part of the "Force Intervention Brigade" or FIB for short. He pointed out that the members of the FIB differ from ordinary peacekeepers in that they had much more aggressive rules of engagement. They were authorized to shoot first without having to wait to fire only in self-defense.⁴

When the FIB was initiated in 2013, it was described as the first time the UN had created an "offensive" combat force.⁵ It was ordered to "neutralize and disarm" Congolese rebels and foreign armed groups in the eastern part of the country and it was allowed to carry out offensive operations independently or jointly with the Congolese armed forces. The FIB was described as an "intervention brigade" because it was supposed to operate in "a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner to disrupt the activities of the rebels and other armed groups."⁶

When it established the FIB, the UN Security Council emphasized it was being created on an exceptional basis and was neither a precedent nor prejudicial to the agreed principles of peacekeeping. That prompted some countries to express concern nonetheless about the impact creating an offensive combat force tasked with imposing a peace would have on peacekeeping.

Despite the reservations, the Council's members voted unanimously in favor of the resolution creating the FIB. In recognition of the doubts about its impact, the resolution required the FIB to have a clear exit strategy and expressed the hope it would quickly restore order in the region. Five years later and counting, as indicated by the attack that killed the 14 Tanzanian soldiers, the FIB was taking heavy casualties and appeared to be bogged down in a fight it was not winning. And there was no exit strategy in sight.

So how did the UN's peacekeepers go from being Nobel Peace Prize laureates to combatants battling militant extremists? And if they are now engaged in armed conflict in order to impose a peace, can they win? The answers to those questions have to be addressed by considering how peacekeeping and war have both evolved since the UN's creation and how the international community uses the UN in dealing with those changes. To do that requires beginning with some definitions as it will help in understanding the challenges that those changes have created for the peacekeepers.

A Few Necessary Definitions

When it comes to constructing a definition, the word "peacekeeping" is a bit like the word "globalization." Everyone thinks they know what they mean since they appear frequently in the media. But if you ask people to define either of them in a single sentence, the answers will be all over the map. They are also linked in another way. Globalization is creating greater demands for peacekeeping and, at the same time, making it more difficult. Having a clear definition of both helps explain why.

Defining globalization is difficult because its effects are, well, so global. Thanks to the impact of technology, events that would have been deemed distant and inconsequential now have a far greater effect on more people, more rapidly, more often, and in more ways than at any time in the past. Because of that, globalization creates winners and losers and people think they know into which of those two categories they fall. Those who feel harmed, or even just threatened, by globalization see it as a negative force in their lives. Those who gain from it view it as a positive phenomenon. Because of this, there is a growing library of books on globalization that take a stand for or against it based on the author's assessment its impact.

To avoid the issue of who wins and who loses due to globalization, here is a one-sentence definition of it that makes no judgment about its effects: globalization is people, things, and ideas crossing national boundaries with greater speed, frequency, impact, and reach; usually driven by technological change it is neither new nor reversible. There are

many ways to criticize such a definition, including the fact that it should really be two sentences, but for purposes of this book, it will suffice.

Definitions of peacekeeping are less contested than those for globalization. Few people, outside of those in countries with conflicts, feel directly affected by peacekeeping, and therefore, they have only vague and weak opinions about it. Peacekeeping is generally viewed in a positive light since it seemingly contributes to ending wars and preserving peace. There are not infrequent articles in the media about misbehavior or the failure of peacekeepers, but this is usually seen as the exception rather than the rule.

The reason for considering the definition of globalization together with peacekeeping is because the former has forced the evolution of the latter and that has placed new demands on peacekeepers. The many effects of globalization have added greatly to the challenges faced by them and, at the same time, created more situations where their work is needed.

One example of globalization and its impact on peacekeeping are people crossing national borders in greater numbers than ever before. If they are forced to leave their homes, but not their nations, they are considered internally displaced and are not automatically an international problem. If they cross a national boundary into another country, then they are refugees and by definition an international problem that the UN has to address.

Today there are more displaced people in the world than at any time since the UN was created.⁷ One person out of every 113 people on the planet has been forced to leave home and over 21 million of them, about a third of the total, have become refugees.⁸ In other words, people are crossing national borders as refugees in numbers that are unprecedented since World War II.

While some are economic migrants seeking to escape poverty, many of them undertook their journeys because of conflicts in their countries. The awareness that safety may lie just beyond the nearest border is increasingly widespread thanks to information and ideas crossing borders. In addition, helping refugees move on has become such an industry that people smuggling is the third largest criminal activity in the world after arms and drug trafficking. The head of the International Organization of Migration, which is the leading inter-governmental

group dealing with migration and was founded in 1951, claimed in a 2017 report that human trafficking amounted to \$35 billion in the Mediterranean area alone.⁹ That may be an overestimate, but it is clearly a huge, illicit industry.

Another criminal activity that adds to the demands for peacekeeping is the trafficking of illicit arms, which may be in third place in the list of worldwide illegal activities after trafficking in people and drugs.¹⁰ The availability of light weapons makes starting and sustaining an insurgency or terrorist group much easier. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, many of the countries that had belonged to it needed products to export. The weapons they no longer needed provided a source of revenue and helped create an international arms market where anyone with cash could shop.

Besides more people and weapons crossing national boundaries, ideas are also giving rise to another cause of the greater demand for peacekeeping. The spread of ideologies that embrace violent extremism created new conflicts that some countries wanted the UN to address through peacekeeping. Because information can cross-borders faster and more easily, when the media reports on the humanitarian disasters caused by those conflicts, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the public press for the international community to do something. And peacekeeping increasingly became the “something” whether it is the right thing or not.

One other example of the impact of ideas crossing borders was people learning from foreign news sources that they do not have to tolerate corrupt and repressive governments. The Arab Spring began when a Tunisian fruit seller decided to protest having to pay bribes by setting himself on fire. In so doing, he ignited popular uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Assisted by social media and the Internet, upheavals took place in country after country. In cases like Libya and Syria, those upheavals set off another round of humanitarian problems, refugees, and calls for the UN to become engaged.

The effects of globalization are part of the reason why the numbers of peacekeepers have grown dramatically in the last twenty years. After nearly reaching a level of 80,000 in the mid-1990s the numbers quickly fell below 20,000. That happened following the casualties suffered by

soldiers from the USA and other nations in Somalia and could be called the “Black Hawk down effect” after the movie that depicted those events.

That 1993 incident prompted a reassessment of how much should be asked of peacekeepers. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in a speech in 1995 tried to define the limits: “In war situations, the international community should authorize the combat forces needed to deal with it. Where a cease-fire is in place, and where the consent and cooperation of the parties is reliable, peacekeepers should be deployed.”¹¹ The following year, another UN official put it more succinctly saying: “The UN is out of peace enforcement for good.”¹² By that he meant, he believed the UN would no longer use force to create and sustain peace.

That forecast was wildly off the mark as the effort to keep the UN out of the business of trying to impose peace did not last long. New operations were soon launched that dragged peacekeepers into situation where there was no peace to keep. The number of peacekeepers bottomed out and then began to grow rapidly only three years later. Within a decade, it reached a level of about 100,000 and has stayed about that number ever since.

This growth has taken place largely unnoticed and not understood by the general public. If you asked the average person, who has the most troops stationed in a foreign country, many would probably be able to answer that it is the USA. Few people would know that the UN comes in second in the form of peacekeepers with the 100,000 people engaged in the 14 operations that are currently active.¹³ And few people would be able to describe what those peacekeepers are doing other than to say the obvious—they must be keeping the peace somewhere. But to understand when and why peacekeeping fails, it is important to draw distinctions about what it is and what it is not.

Defining Peacekeeping

Any discussion of peacekeeping is complicated by the fact that there is no common definition of the term. As mentioned earlier, the word is not even used in the UN Charter. While the drafters of the Charter did not use the word, journalists, diplomats, academics, and others have to

such an extent that it has been applied to virtually any situation involving soldiers who are not engaged in combat.

The problem of defining it has been greatly complicated by the growing demands for peacekeeping caused by globalization and other factors. The motivation (ideologies and other reasons to rebel) and the means (illicit arms) spread more easily and gave rise to conflicts whose effects (refugees and displaced persons) the international community could not ignore. The result was the number and mandates of PKOs grew, as did the number of ways to define what they are trying to accomplish.

The International Peace Academy, an independent, nonprofit institution dedicated to preventing and helping to settle armed conflicts, defined the role of a PKO as “the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of a peaceful third-party intervention organized and directed internationally, using a multinational force of soldiers, police, and civilians to restore and maintain peace.”¹⁴ Such a definition is sufficiently broad to apply to virtually any conflict where international intervention is contemplated. It therefore places only modest limits on the debate about just what it is the peacekeepers are supposed to do.

Because of this difficulty with definitions and the resulting confusion about what can and should be asked of peacekeepers, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in 1992 described four different types of operations¹⁵:

Preventive diplomacy: action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.

Peacemaking: action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the UN Charter.

Peacekeeping: the deployment of a UN presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all parties concerned, normally involving UN military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well.

Peacebuilding: action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.

The Secretary-General's attempt to categorize different missions into four types was not the last word on the subject, however. In a collection of essays written by American military experts in the wake of the Somalia experience, one author put forth a slightly different set of definitions and asserted that they had gained general acceptance.¹⁶ They are a bit more descriptive and break down peacekeeping into five distinct types of operations:

Peacemaking: using mediation, conciliation, arbitration, or diplomatic initiatives to peacefully resolve a conflict such as with the Vance-Owen initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Peacekeeping: traditionally involving military personnel as monitors/observers under restricted rules of engagement (ROE) once a cease-fire has been negotiated. Examples of this type include Cyprus and the Golan Heights.

Peace enforcing: using military force to complete a cessation of hostilities or to terminate acts of aggression by a member state. Enforcement of "No Fly Zones" in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and actions in Somalia are cases in point.

Peacebuilding: rebuilding institutions and infrastructure within a country to create conditions conducive to peace, such as in Cambodia and Somalia.

Protective engagement: employing military means to provide safe havens or a security environment for humanitarian operations.

Differences in defining the roles peacekeepers play are important, as they have led to misunderstandings and false expectations. Such expectations can compound the perception of failure when they are not met as happened in Somalia. As US Senator John McCain once put it: "Neither the UN Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, nor for that matter, the Clinton administration could define the concept in the same way from one day to another or from one country to another. To Americans, peacemaking in Somalia meant

feeding a starving people. To the UN Secretary-General, it meant war-lord hunting.”¹⁷

The lack of a common definition of what the peacekeepers are supposed to accomplish therefore can contribute to a PKO being deemed a failure. At a minimum, it will complicate communications between civilian officials and military officers, as the latter try to prevent the former from yielding to “mission creep”—the process whereby the goals of the PKO are constantly redefined and expanded, leaving the military faced with trying to accomplish an ever-changing mission.

One visual tool that helps to clarify the situation is called the Curve of Conflict, which is used by the US Institute of Peace. The curve shows that the point in a conflict at which the international community chooses to intervene largely determines what actions can be taken (Fig. 1.1).

The horizontal axis measures time and the vertical axis measures the level of violence. While the curve is a useful visualization, like most simplifications, it tends to clarify, but at the same time mislead. It makes it seem that conflicts follow a neat bell-shaped curve. Rather than smooth curves, the level of violence in any war usually looks more like the chart of the stock market with sharp peaks and valleys.

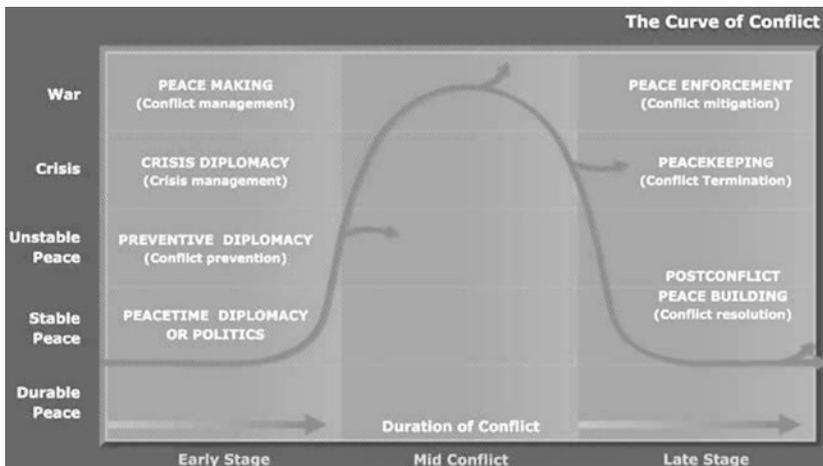


Fig. 1.1 EEE conflict curve

The depiction of the curve also hints at another problem as it has several arrows that veer off in different directions from the one taken by the bell-shaped path. That is because at any point in a conflict it is never certain whether the fighting is going to increase, decrease, or stay the same. While there may be a general trend, there are often sharp swings in either direction and when the violence will end is also rarely apparent.

Defining what the peacekeepers might be able to do is often a moving target as the situation on the ground changes and moves along the curve, but this visualization does make clearer what is being attempted at different stages of the war. Crisis diplomacy, crisis management, and peacetime diplomacy can describe any attempt to lessen the impact of a conflict in its early stages or preferably to prevent the fighting from breaking out at all.

If that fails, the five types of PKOs defined above kick in. They vary greatly in their size, cost, complexity, purpose, length, and rules of engagement. And as the Curve of Conflict indicates they come at different points in the evolution of the war.

Once the fighting has begun, peacemaking would be the first intervention. It, like preventive diplomacy, can be inexpensive since only a small number of people need be engaged. It can consist mainly of a special representative of the Secretary-General dispatched to the scene with instructions to help the parties reach a cease-fire. Peacemaking puts the special representative in the role of a mediator. For a mediator to have any chance of success, the parties to the conflict have to be willing to accept someone acting in that capacity. If the combatants are not ready to end the fighting, efforts at peacemaking and mediation cannot amount to much.

If a cease-fire is obtained, the next phase is what can be referred to as “classical” or “traditional” peacekeeping. Classical peacekeeping was the kind used in the first UN PKOs. Those operations required the insertion of UN troops between the armies of two countries in a well-defined geographical area, after a cease-fire had been agreed bringing a halt to a conventional, interstate conflict. It was then the task of the peacekeepers to monitor the space in between the two armies to ensure neither took advantage of the pause in the fighting. This would continue until the parties worked out a permanent peace.

Such conventional wars between states over territory, and therefore the need for new classical PKOs, have become extremely rare. More common are civil wars where the army of the government in power is pitted against one or more rebel groups that are trying to seize that power. It is often a struggle using guerrilla tactics without clearly defined geographical limits. These conflicts present the problem, not simply of monitoring a cease-fire, but also of nation-building in order to resolve the conflict permanently. Although they are fought with light weapons, demobilization, disarmament, and demining often become essential elements of the PKO.

Since it entails so many different tasks, a PKO of this type is referred to as a multifunctional or multidimensional operation. This multifunctional, or peace-building, effort was what was attempted in Angola and Mozambique in the early 1990s. Such operations present the peacekeepers with far more complex set of challenges than “classical” peacekeeping.

Another important distinction in the five different types of PKOs is to be found in their rules of engagement or ROE. The ROE are stipulated in the mandate given to the operation by the Security Council. If the mandate uses the language of Chapter Six of the UN Charter, it authorizes the peacekeepers to use force only to protect themselves. It does that based on the assumptions that the UN is there to help the parties to end the conflict, the parties want the UN presence, and a greater use of force is not required.

If one or both parties make those assumptions invalid by continuing to commit acts of violence, the Council can authorize the use of military force “as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security” under Chapter Seven of the Charter.¹⁸ Those actions can include “demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of members of the United Nations.” It is this language which gives rise to mandates that instruct the peacekeepers to use “all necessary means” to accomplish their mission.

Peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping all assume the parties to the conflict agree to having peacekeepers present and that those peacekeepers are impartial and do not use force except for self-defense. If that is the case, a mandate under Chapter Six is possible.

Peace enforcement or peace engagement means the UN has decided to impose at least a limited peace in order to end the fighting. To do that requires, the peacekeepers be given a mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which stipulates that all necessary means including military action may be used to carry out the functions prescribed by that mandate.

The decision to order the peacekeepers to use all necessary means to carry out their mandate is always a difficult one for the UN Security Council. It implies that the Council has found it necessary for the peacekeepers to be empowered to take and inflict casualties in order to obtain peace. That is something the international community is never enthusiastic about doing. In the debate about such questions, some delegates will ask whether soldiers who are supposed to keep a peace should be asked to engage in combat in order to establish it. Another question is whether, if they are ordered to do so, will they be willing to put their lives at risk. The answers depend on who is doing the asking and who is doing the risking. They are not the same and to understand why requires some consideration of another definition.

That is the definition of the term “United Nations.” It is used with great frequency, but with little thought to what it means. While it may seem obvious what that organization is and what it stands for, the term needs to be examined a bit because that helps to understand where the fault lies when peacekeeping fails.

The UN is a club that has risen in membership from 55 when it was founded in June 1945 to 193 countries with the addition of South Sudan in 2011. Here is a chart of how the organization has grown over the years (Table 1.1).

All of the UN members belong to the General Assembly, which is mainly a very large debating club. The General Assembly does represent the opinion of the world, but lacks real power. The clout in the organization lies with the Security Council, which includes only 15 countries. And the Council’s actions can be dictated by the five permanent members that are able to veto any resolution that is proposed. The other ten are rotating members serving only for two years each. The P5, as the five permanent members are known, are the winners of World War II and the first countries to obtain nuclear weapons—the USA, Russia, France,

Table 1.1 Growth in UN members

Year	Number of UN members
1945	55
1955	76
1965	117
1975	144
1985	159
1995	185
2005	191
2010	192

the United Kingdom and China. Any peacekeeping initiatives have to be launched by the Security Council and that requires the support, or at least the acquiescence, of all of the P5 countries and a majority of at least 9 of the 15 Council members.

All the UN member states say they endorse international ideals, but at the same time they all use the organization to pursue their own national goals. In other words, the member states do not sacrifice their important interests for the common good. Because of their veto power, the P5 countries are the most obvious practitioners of this approach. A necessary, but not sufficient condition, for launching a peacekeeping mission is therefore that it not negatively affect a significant interest of any of the P5 countries.

For instance, the Camp David Accords, which President Carter helped negotiate between Israel and Egypt, required the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. To help that happen, a peacekeeping force was essential to ensure the Egyptian armed forces did not move more military assets in the area than the limits stipulated in the treaty. The Soviet Union, however, threatened to veto the launching of such an operation because its client state, Syria, did not want to see one established before Israel agreed to withdraw from Syrian territory on the Golan Heights that Israel occupied. When UN was unable to act, a peacekeeping mission, the MFO, was set up in 1982 nonetheless outside the auspices of the UN. And it continues in operation to this day even though, as will be explained later, the two armies it is supposed to keep apart are now conducting joint combat operations together in the Sinai against a common enemy.

In addition to the way the interests of the member states, particularly the most powerful ones, impacts the effectiveness of the UN, the other aspect of the organization that needs to be considered is that it is staffed by an army of international bureaucrats that numbers around 44,000.¹⁹ They work all over the world and come from all over the world.

Civil servants, whether national or international, are sometimes thanked for their service by politicians, but are more likely to be criticized for their work. They are easy targets for politicians, because politicians have the power to determine the budget of the organizations for which the bureaucrats work. The politicians make the policies and leave it to the bureaucrats to implement them even when that is impossible. When the policies fail, the former never admit that they were wrong and invariably blame the latter. For example, congressmen often like to criticize the Internal Revenue Service. But it was Congress that has enacted tax laws that are 2.4 million words long, which has required the IRS to come up with another 7.7 million words to interpret them.

This tendency toward bashing bureaucrats instead of taking responsibility is as much an international phenomenon as it is a Washington one. The politicians, the member states and in particular the P5, decide what tasks will be assigned to the peacekeepers, what their mandate will be, and what resources they will have. When things go wrong, one thing that will not be heard is any of ambassadors of the UN members blaming themselves.

As a result, the staff of an organization with 193 bosses, all with different agendas, tends to be risk adverse and resistant to transparency. In addition, it is often difficult to measure just what the organization is accomplishing. In the private sector, there is always the bottom line to provide a precise metric of success or failure. The goal is a simple one—to make a bigger profit than last quarter and the shareholders and board of directors share in that goal. The tactics are straightforward—produce the product efficiently, market it skillfully and stay ahead of the competition. And for many companies, environmental impacts are unimportant and corporate social responsibility is little more than a public relations gimmick.

Governments and international organizations do not have such a simple course to navigate. There is often disagreement on the goals and how