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Conflict Resolution: U.N. Nonfighting Forces

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**A lecture delivered at the Naval War College
on 27 September 1967
by Professor Lincoln P. Bloomfield**

Thank you very much, Professor Hartmann. The one thing which you didn't mention, which I'm really not ashamed of, is of having spent a few years in a blue uniform with some gold stripes on it. The subject that I was asked to talk about this morning is international nonfighting forces. It occurred to me in a whimsical moment that I could think of a number of national armed forces that would be a very fit subject for discussion this morning. I don't think that's what Professor Hartmann meant. The nonfighting forces he meant are those usually called peacekeeping, and I'm not sure why he

called it the other except to make sure either that I didn't talk about what happened when the U.N. forces in the Congo began shooting, or that I didn't just limit it to what some people refer to as peacekeeping.

The peacekeeping business—and I'm going to call it that—was probably best epitomized in the spring of 1967 when, first, the U.N. Emergency Force withdrew in indecent haste from the line of demarcation in the Gaza Strip, and everyone more or less said, "Well, that's typical of what happens when trouble starts; they disappear. Peacekeeping is a farce." And then the fighting took

place, and sooner or later it was inevitable, and could have been predicted, that U.N. military observers were again placed between the parties along the Suez Canal. I think this life cycle is a very revealing one. It illustrates the stringent limitations, above all political, on international nonfighting forces. It also illustrates the inevitability of having to turn to these inadequate, inefficient, politically divided kinds of forces, sooner or later, to do certain kinds of jobs. Both, in other words, are true.

The modern version of peacekeeping really began in 1956 when that UNEF force was first interposed between the two sides after the Suez War, after the shooting stopped, and in a sense it represented a Soviet-American veto over the use of force by the other powers. That superpower harmony is of course what made it possible to launch an international nonfighting force onto the scene to monitor a cease fire. This was followed by the Lebanon operation in 1958, the Congo operation in 1960, by a rather unsuccessful effort to apply U.N. nonfighting uniformed military personnel to the Yemen conflict, then in West New Guinea, and now presently in Cyprus. These are really what we mean when we talk about peacekeeping, and it certainly appears that they have supplied a needed capacity to avert a direct superpower clash or to damp down a local conflict of the variety that turn out to be the wars that actually take place in this age. My project at M.I.T. has just studied the 53 of them we could find since World War II. Since all of them save two have taken place in the developing regions, outside of Europe, it did seem that U.N. peacekeeping has been a very important element in the military mix representing situations that national military forces could not handle alone.

Peacekeeping also implied a very valuable role for the U.N. Secretary General. Dag Hammarskjöld was a virtuoso in playing this role, considering

the very thin ice that existed beneath it politically; and he was able to skate skillfully on thin ice, and he accomplished quite a lot in the peacekeeping field.

Peacekeeping also implied a very important role for small countries as "third parties." I came to believe that if in 1945 the peace of the world was assumed to depend on great power involvement in all conflicts, it ought to be understood today that the peace of the world often depends on keeping the great powers out of just those conflicts for which they were supposed to take responsibility. To me this was one of the great insights of the period.

In the meantime this hopeful trend, this interesting capability, encountered what I suppose we can call "Red backlash." The Soviets, after at first approving the 1960 U.N. Congo operation, soon realized that a new element or force had come on the world scene where the existing ground rules did not apply, particularly the ground rule embodied in the great power veto. The new force was the U.N. Secretary General in the role of Secretary Generalissimo, as it were, commanding a 20,000 man force in the Congo. The unforgivable sin in Soviet eyes was that because ONUC was acting very impartially in the Congo, it was thereby fouling up what had looked, in the late 1950's, like a fairly promising Soviet political beachhead into central Africa. The Soviets came back with a vicious attack on the Secretary General and on the whole concept of the international civil servant, in the process proposing the Troika—a wholly unworkable three-headed U.N. Secretariat, which the great majority of members decisively rejected. This all brought the U.N. to a great institutional, constitutional crisis, ostensibly over who was going to pay for the Congo operation, but with the financial problem in reality a symbol of the political problems that underlay this kind of international

decisionmaking.

Today some bills remain unpaid from the Congo operation. There is little or no advance planning about international nonfighting forces; it remains a politically sensitive subject and implies profound differences between nations.

Let us back off for a minute and consider what kind of functions we have been talking about. In the U.N. Charter, as drafted in 1945, there is no reference to peacekeeping. You simply won't find that word or function in the basic treaty to which we are a party. At one extreme, the Charter embodies enforcement powers in the hands of the Security Council, requiring unanimity among the superpowers and thus a dead letter so far; and at the other extreme are the "pacific settlement" provisions of the Charter under which procedures for factfinding, mediation, and the like take place. In other words, these are enforcement powers implying a kind of world government that does not exist; and a conciliatory process.

At the beginning, in the late 1940's and early 1950's, this pacific settlement authority produced the first U.N. military or quasi-military presence. But this involved the function of observation, emphasizing the man with the binoculars eyeballing a frontier to see if the nomads had guns under their burnouses (or black pajamas or the various other disguises people wear crossing frontiers these days); to see whether an agreed truce was being breached; or to see whether threatening preparations were underway on one side of the line or the other. This observation function was organized under the pacific settlement function and was not peacekeeping in the contemporary sense. It started with five military observers in Greece in 1947; about a hundred U.N. people in Kashmir in those stony hills in 1948—increased to about 150 military observers, each covering an inordinate amount of frontier, after the fighting in 1965; Palestine in 1948, where a sepa-

rate U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization is still in existence; in Indonesia in 1949; some military observers in conjunction with a good offices effort that was successful in ending the war between the Netherlands and Indonesia; and I myself would add to that list the West Irian force. The latter had the initials of UNSF (United Nations Security Force) which was twisted around by some cynics to UNFS, standing for "U.N. Face-Saving Force," since its task, with about a thousand Pakistani troops and 30 Canadian airmen, was to watch West New Guinea being handed over to Sukarno. But nonetheless it was observation; it just happened that they were watching something some people disapproved of!

I'm not going to talk about Korea which was a freak, and not a standard U.N. kind of operation likely to be repeated, providing a U.N. umbrella or figleaf over a superpower military action. (Incidentally, one of our great problems in peacekeeping is using the United Nations as a figleaf, and then trying to hold it over our heads as an umbrella. It's really very small.)

Peacekeeping, then, came along in 1956. The Suez force, UNEF, involved 5,000 men on the average. The posts along the line were half a kilometer apart, and the men in them—Danes, Brazilians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Yugoslavs—had small arms, but their rifles were not loaded and they could have been run over by a boy scout troop if necessary. The thing keeping that force viable and deterring Egypt and/or Israel for a decade was not its military capability, but the fact that to run over it would involve running over some rather embarrassing countries. Indeed, when Egypt was making its demonstration last spring in the Gaza Strip, the first step was to try and find a way of forcing the U.N. force out because of the obvious political hazards of just running it down. UNEF at that moment was a farce rather than a force, but it

was not a farce as a deterrent so long as it worked as a deterrent.

The Lebanon operation had a hundred soldiers from 11 countries. The Congo operation had about 20,000 drawn from 23 countries. The Cyprus forces in place now, trying to preserve some semblance of peace on that unhappy island, number about 7,000 men from 6 countries plus some police from New Zealand and other countries.

Even these peacekeeping forces are all nonfighting forces. They have rarely fired a shot in anger, except at the tail end of the Congo operation. They were a new kind of deterrent, and they operated under the so-called Dag Hammarskjöld ground rules. These rules called for not drawing on the great powers but rather keeping them out and turning to small countries. The ground rules called for getting the consent of the host country even if the host country was lying prostrate as Nasser was in 1956, simply because there is no arrangement in this world today for international police operations to be pushed into someone's territory against his will. The United States would not accept that kind of arrangement, nor would the Soviet Union, nor would most other countries in the world. So it was no surprise that when Nasser blew the whistle on UNEF, UNEF had to leave. There would have to be a completely different kind of world order for UNEF to have been able to stay in Egypt against Egypt's will, and this is not that kind of world. The composition of peacekeeping forces is covered by the ground rules. A detachment of the Queen's Own Canadian Rifles was actually embarking on a transport plane in Ottawa in the first UNEF operation when Nasser vetoed them, because they looked too much like British forces, and down they came.

The techniques we are talking about are nonshooting, nonfighting, nonviolent. We are talking about techniques that are really police rather than mili-

tary functions in the classic sense. The astonishing thing is that we expect relatively militarily trained squads, platoons, companies, and battalions from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Finland, Tunisia, or wherever to act as though they had the type of sophisticated police-type riot control training we now wish American police forces all had in dealing with civil disturbances in this country. Actually, the Nigerians, riot police in the U.N. force, were about the best trained riot police one could find, and certainly of the right color to move into situations where it was politically unacceptable to have white people. One of the tragedies of the Nigerian civil war is in terms of Nigeria as one of the few African countries that had well trained military police, of enormous value in this kind of operation.

The peacekeeping function of pacification and tranquilizing also includes observation techniques of surveillance, of counting, of identification, of border controls which in a sense are like customs operations. It combines some military, some military police, some shore patrol, some police force, and some intelligence functions (they can't use the latter word because this would appear to justify spying). As a senior Canadian officer said to me recently, "This is very complex for a simple soldier to do." The same officer said he was raised on the theory that different countries wore different colored uniforms so the soldiers would know whom to kill and whom not to kill. He found the peacekeeping metier a reversal of many things his men were taught.

Now, not to be able to fight, sometimes not to be able even to defend yourself, to have to disarm women who are throwing beer bottles at you, to pacify, to take on civil functions, to surrender rather than ever get into a fighting position—perhaps there is a moral for U.N. forces in that rather rude story about a general of an unnamed country who said his army had suffered

a terrible disaster in the last war—six of his men were killed, eight were wounded, and 10,000 surrendered.

The financial problem that arose from the use of these forces is, as I said, not really a problem of money. But of course it's a problem of money in the sense that the United Nations has to pay its bills. The Cyprus operation runs by passing the hat. It's an unsatisfactory way of financing it, but undoubtedly a better way than assessing countries and later facing the question of whether one breaks up the organization because some countries won't pay for quasi-military operations they feel, rightly or wrongly, run counter to their national interest. This, of course, is the argument the Soviets have used. They have, in fact, paid for some peace-keeping operations like the Greek one in the early days, and the Lebanese observer group in 1958; even some Communist states have sneaked in and paid their arrears. Yugoslavia has paid up, and incidentally the Arabs paid finally for their share of the U.N. Force in Egypt.

But fundamentally it seems to me unrealistic to expect any country to pay for an operation that it feels undoes its national interest. The United States, it may be recalled, has refused to pay several times for U.N. activities about which it felt strongly negative. One episode involved reimbursement for U.N. Secretariat employees who were fired in the early 1950's on American demand. There ensued an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice holding that these people were entitled to certain minimum reimbursement; the United States refused to pay it, and the U.N. finally had to take the money out of a special account put aside for salary equalization purposes. Then in the early 1960's the U.N. Special Fund came in with about 200 projects, all of which the United States approved with the exception of one costing about \$100,000 for an agricul-

tural experiment in Cuba. The House Appropriations Subcommittee held up the appropriation for the entire U.S. contribution to the Special Fund where, as a whole, we had been battling something like 990 in terms of having our way virtually every time.

Thus, when some demand that the Russians be expelled or in any event punished for not paying their assessed share for the Congo operation, which they considered a political disaster for them, it does not really make much sense. In the end the U.S. Government didn't believe it made too much sense, and in the summer of 1965 ended the crisis with some face-saving provisions. Incidentally, there continue to be rumors that the Soviets are coming in with a check for a "voluntary contribution" as soon as they can find a propitious moment. A year ago, to my certain knowledge, a very high-ranking member of an Eastern European delegation had in his pocket a speech he was planning to read to the U.N. Assembly announcing his country's voluntary contribution toward the deficit, but just as a courtesy he was going to wait until the Chief Soviet Delegate went first. I guess he is still waiting.

The closest thing to common sense toward solution of the constitutional-financial problem is a proposal the Irish came in with last year. The Irish have, incidentally, been most faithful peace-keepers, contrary to the reputation they've endured for centuries. They proposed that the great powers pay most of the future costs but with a provision for a great power to "opt out." This would mean that if the United States didn't like a U.N. Force being put together and sent, say, to Rhodesia to enforce a U.N. vote, the United States, instead of making a great crisis of it that might break up the United Nations (which almost happened when the Russians were in that position) would simply opt out. There would be no expectations that it would

have to pay the bill. The Irish plan didn't get through, but it looks like the sort of thing that might happen.

There is a continuing need for this kind of function if one looks at the list of prospective crises and small wars, particularly the many situations where the United States might not want to get involved directly (and I think there may be an increasing tendency to favor such nondirect involvement). The list of prospective local conflicts includes the problem of Southwest Africa which the United Nations "took over" from South Africa last year but has not been able to take physically. South Africa is now applying the apartheid principle to Southwest Africa although it no longer belongs to them under international law, their League of Nations mandate having been officially terminated. Serious crises could arise from this situation. White minority ruled Rhodesia stands in defiance of British-sponsored U.N. sanctions, such as they are. Angola and Mozambique I would just assume are bound to blow up sooner or later, given the universal ending of all other Western colonialism. The newly formed South Yemen doesn't look terribly stable in the face of competition for control over South Arabia. To the list might be added Nigeria, which may or may not come to look like the Congo did in 1960; somewhere else in Southeast Asia that might develop the way Vietnam developed; and some of the hardy perennials such as the India-Pakistan conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which remains totally unsettled. This list of contingencies all seems to turn us again in the direction of some kind of international capability. I would remind you that many U.N. peacekeeping operations are what the French call a *pis aller*. Basically they're unsatisfactory, but they are the best we have available to us under the circumstances, and in those terms they add up to a surprisingly good record.

Let me spell the latter point out. In

the case of the Congo, Prime Minister Lumumba first came to President Eisenhower asking him to send the Marines. Eisenhower, I think very wisely, said, "Uh uh, you've got the wrong address, go to New York." He correctly did not want to get the United States stuck directly and unilaterally on that particular piece of flypaper. There were no other real alternatives. It was unthinkable that Belgium would take care of the post-independence trouble in the Congo, because it was the return of the Belgian paratroopers that had brought about this mutiny. If Eisenhower had decided otherwise, I imagine we'd still be in the Congo with half a million men or more. Instead, the United Nations had to do it.

When communal fighting broke out in Cyprus in 1963 many people said "No more messy U.N. operations, this is a NATO problem, let NATO handle it." But Washington looked at NATO and found that there really wasn't any capability to administer peacekeeping operations within the alliance. It just simply wasn't constructed for the purpose, and again, finally, the United Nations was turned to. In Lebanon in 1958 the U.S. Marines went in first, and then it turned out that the only way to really get us out in a face-saving way was to get the United Nations in. This may all be repeated someday in Southeast Asia. It is summed up to me by the story Adlai Stevenson used to tell of the conversation in the Garden of Eden when Adam first proposed to Eve, and Eve hesitated just for a moment, whereupon Adam asked, "Is there someone else?" Well, for peacekeeping there doesn't seem to be anyone else. So we are doubtless going to continue to have along with the benefits the known disadvantages—ambiguous political directives, a split world organization, and a basically inefficient operation.

As people look for other alternatives, it is important to consider regional organizations. Not many people seem to

remember that there was once a joint Arab League nonfighting, peacekeeping force, put together and sent to Kuwait in the midst of a crisis in 1961. The force consisted of 3,300 men—1,200 Egyptians, 1,200 Saudi Arabians, 400 Sudanese, 300 Jordanians, 200 Tunisians—under a Saudi Arabian general. As I mentioned before, in 1965 the OAS flag was, shall we say, hoisted over the U.N. presence in the Dominican Republic. But when Secretary of State Dean Rusk went to Rio the next fall to promote the creation of an OAS peacekeeping force, he was reportedly told by a number of countries that it was the last thing they wanted; their greatest concern was not peacekeeping, but the prevention of intervention either by the United States or by anyone else in their internal affairs.

The French, true to their individualist if not anti-organization spirit of the day, have been developing their own international peacekeeping capabilities in the form of a mobile brigade for peacekeeping in French-speaking Africa. (Presumably this will be used when the French-speaking satellite De Gaulle is developing to broadcast to francophone Africa annoys its audience; this brigade can be sent in to calm them down.) I repeat, this is a very French kind of operation, and there is nothing international about it.

Peacekeeping technology, if one looks ahead, might well benefit from actual tranquilizers as part of a tranquilizing presence. Psychochemicals, new riot control devices such as the chemical Mace, the use of light, or sound, or foam, super water pistols—all this sounds bizarre until you remember that a most important military requirement in the U.N. Congo operation was a defense against flying beer bottles; the wicker shield proved to be one of the greatest technological breakthroughs of our age! Well, maybe it would be a good idea to deescalate to chain armor and mild drugs, and move away from stra-

tegic air arms when we think about this kind of peacekeeping operation.

In the end, much of this is necessarily going to depend on Soviet agreement with the United States. On that depends, for example, even such minor advances as beefing up the U.N. Headquarters staff in New York so that they can do some advance logistical planning, develop some manuals, and the like. The U.N. staff puts the best face on this and holds that each peacekeeping operation is essentially ad hoc with few common denominators.

But because of the extreme political sensitivity of the problem inside the United Nations, some governments have been getting together privately. The Scandinavians have been particularly active. They have set up a permanent Scandinavian peacekeeping force consisting of trained battalions of 1,000 men each from all four Scandinavian countries. The latter have some common training every year and can operate either individually or collectively for peacekeeping purposes. Canada has also been in the forefront of peacekeeping. The Canadian Defense White Paper of 1964 revolutionized the military mission envisaged for Canadian forces, which evidently do not want to be considered simply an adjunct to American military power. The Canadians were looking for a role in the world and decided that peacekeeping was the name of it. They have been restructuring their forces to be able to do, among other things, a major peacekeeping job. The Canadians, incidentally, have furnished virtually all the signal units for all U.N. peacekeeping operations so far. In addition, the New Zealanders, the Australians, and other people "like us" have made constructive contributions. But, of course, one trouble is that one needs people from Africa, Asia, and other nonwhite, non-Western countries.

Some people are, of course, opposed to peacekeeping. I do not mean just the Russians and the French, i.e., the strict

constitutionalists. There are some Americans who got worried in the Congo that we were trampling down the one apparently pro-Western Congolese leader, one, moreover, who understood American businessmen—Tshombe of Katanga. Among even more people there was a feeling that a U.N. peacekeeping operation should not become a fighting situation. One could sum up the feeling by saying that "If you open that Pandora's box, you might let out a Trojan horse." This can lead in turn to an indisposition to see what more could be done to improve the U.N. capability.

Admittedly, there is potential danger. There might be occasions in which the United States would not just opt out in paying, but would bitterly oppose an international peacekeeping operation. Consider one in the context of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Assume that the beachhead had been established and centers of resistance formed in Cuba. Then consider that in great indignation the majority of countries in the United Nations had said—quite correctly—that the U.S. action was a flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter, of international law, and indeed of U.S. policy. Suppose a two-thirds majority then had voted to set up a peacekeeping force at the request of Cuba to protect Cuba against this invasion. What would the U.S. view of peacekeeping be under these circumstances? I would say—dim, much as the Russian view of peacekeeping in Central Africa became dim when Soviet planes were landing Soviet agents in Leopoldville and the U.N. representative got the Congolese to put oil barrels on the runway at N'djili airport, and put an end to the Soviet operation, all in the name of even-handed, neutral peacekeeping. Everyone is entitled to have nightmares about undesired peacekeeping as Prime Minister Harold Wilson had when he spoke of his nightmare of "the Red Army in blue berets." At the same time, Wilson is a very strong advocate of U.N. sanctions

with respect to Rhodesia. So there are a lot of ambiguous and ambivalent feelings on the part of countries.

Finally, there remains the problem of settling disputes. If you put a peacekeeping force in and just put the lid on, as U Thant has worried publicly, it can have the effect of discouraging the parties from feeling forced to settle

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Lincoln P. Bloomfield holds a B.A., an M.A., and a Ph.D. from Harvard University; he was awarded a Littauer Fellowship and a Rockefeller Fellowship.

During World War II Professor Bloomfield served in the U.S. Navy, including a tour of duty with the Office of Strategic Services in India, Burma, and China as Deputy Chief, State Department-OSS Research and Intelligence Service, China Theater. He is a lecturer at various military colleges and a Consultant to Department of State, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and private industry. Professor Bloomfield is presently the Director of the Arms Control Project at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for International Studies and Professor of Political Science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a member of the Board of Editors of *International Organization*; Fellow Member, Hudson Institute; Member, Council on Foreign Relations, and Institute for Strategic Studies (London); U.S. Member, Advisory Committee, International Information Center on Peacekeeping Operations (Paris); and Co-chairman, Joint Harvard-MIT Arms Control Seminar.

Professor Bloomfield is the author of *The United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy*; *Evolution or Revolution: The UN and the Problem of Peaceful Territorial Change*; editor and coauthor of *Khrushchev and the Arms Race: Soviet Interests in Arms Control and Disarmament 1954-1964*; *International Military Forces: The Question of Peacekeeping in an Armed and Disarming World*; and *Outer Space: Prospects for Man and Society*. He is also the author of many articles which have appeared in various publications and periodicals.

their differences. The Israelis are arguing from the logic of this, saying that the underlying issues have to be dealt with. Perhaps if Pakistan said this, it would force some kind of solution of the Kashmir problem. Maybe if the Turkish Cypriots or the Greek Cypriots refused to have peacekeeping, and either fought it out or scared Ankara and Athens so badly that there would be a settlement, it would be better than temporizing with peacekeeping.

On the other hand, when the guns go off, and the emergency National Security Council and Security Council meetings and so on are called at three in the morning, I notice a great indisposition on anyone's part to say, "Oh well, let them fight it out." There is rather usually a sense of semihysteria, and particularly on the part of American decisionmakers, a desire for a stable world; the last thing we want is explosions going on around the world. Thus the United States generally does support peacekeeping, and generally talks about the need to settle these disputes; but we do not invest very much effort in the followup once the lid is on again. I am afraid the United States and the United

Nations are *both* organized not so much to plan, as to put out fires. If there is ever going to be real improvement here it is probably going to come from the middle powers. Whoever takes the necessary initiative, the United Nations and the world generally are going to have to act periodically as though some instruments in fact exist for collective quasi-military action even though it might, under normal historical circumstances, take a hundred years to build the consensus and the political foundation necessary to undergird this sort of operation. The only way I know to think about this is in terms of the story the British delegate told his colleagues at the Geneva Conference last year in his opening statement. It involved a distinguished French general who visited a detachment of his troops in a very inhospitable piece of the desert. The general suggested to the captain in charge of the detachment that he ought to plant some trees for shelter for the troops. The captain remonstrated, "But, mon general, don't you realize that it would take these trees a hundred years to grow?" "Indeed," replied the general, "then you have no time to lose."

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Self-control is the chief element in self-respect, and self-respect is the chief element in courage.

*Thucydides: History of the
Peloponnesian Wars, c. 404 B.C.*