



CHAPTER TWO

PRINCIPLES OF THE STUDY

"The times call for thinking afresh, for striving together and for creating new ways to overcome crises. This is because the different world that emerged when the cold war ceased is still a world not fully understood. The changed face of conflict today requires us to be perceptive, adaptive, creative and courageous, and to address simultaneously the immediate as well as the root causes of conflict, which all too often lie in the absence of economic opportunities and social inequities. Perhaps above all it requires a deeper commitment to cooperation and true multilateralism than humanity has ever achieved before."

*Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali,
Supplement to an Agenda for Peace, 1995*

Towards a Rapid-Reaction Capability for the UN

There is a void in the United Nations' peacekeeping system which neither policy nor resources has yet been able to fill. This void is a central preoccupation of those Member States, including Canada, that seek to shore up the UN's capabilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Especially during the United Nations' fiftieth year, there has been considerable reflection and discussion around the world about how the institutions and operations of the world body might be improved. Addressing this gap has also been the starting point for a number of proposals that would give the UN new or improved forces and capacities. Sir Brian Urquhart, a distinguished former senior UN official, has proposed a UN volunteer force comprised of military professionals recruited on an individual basis. The Government of the Netherlands has undertaken a study of a UN Rapid Deployment Brigade. The Danish Government has been coordinating an effort to provide a UN High-Readiness Brigade based on the Standby Arrangements System. A number of other countries and non-governmental institutions have come forward with complementary initiatives. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has recommended that serious thought be given to the idea of a rapid reaction force. "Such a force", he has argued, "would be the Security Council's strategic reserve for deployment when there was an emergency need for peace-keeping troops."

The Secretary General's recommendation is, in turn, the starting point for this study. It is undertaken in the conviction that there is an emerging international consensus on the need for more effective, rapid deployment of personnel in peace operations. Indeed, the Rwandan calamity of 1994 illustrated the disastrous consequences of the UN's continuing inability to react rapidly to crisis situations. It is also recognized, however, that there are many serious issues requiring exploration before a rapid-reaction capability can be fully attained within the UN. Moreover, consensus begins to fray when specific solutions are advanced. The consistent focus of the Canadian study has been on how to renew the credibility and capacity of the United Nations through pragmatic and incremental change. Quite properly, Canada and other UN member states wish to approach this issue prudently, since no one seeks to raise expectations beyond the ability of the UN to deliver.