

The Prime Minister's Office is involved in every request and new UN operation. Once the above considerations have been assessed, Cabinet takes the final decision about Canadian participation.

Most of the mandates for UN peacekeeping operations are of limited duration. They expire after a certain period — often six months — and have to be extended by the UN Security Council if the operation is to continue. Thus Canadian peacekeeping commitments are also for a limited period only and are regularly reassessed before being renewed.

There is no legal requirement for Parliament to approve Canadian participation in a peacekeeping mission. However, Parliament has become more actively engaged in security matters. In recent years, the House of Commons has held a series of debates on peacekeeping issues.

Like other UN member states, Canada pays its assessed contributions to all peacekeeping operations irrespective of Canadian participation in the operation. Assessed contributions cover the UN's costs and enable the UN to reimburse troop contributors. They do not cover in-kind or other voluntary contributions, or indirect costs to member states. When Canada participates in a peacekeeping operation, the costs of Canadian personnel and equipment are higher than the reimbursements provided by the UN. These additional costs are met by the Canadian government.

THE CHANGING FACE OF PEACEKEEPING

Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has created peacekeeping missions at an extraordinary rate. Between 1991 and the end of 1994, 21 new missions were set up — three more than the total established during the preceding 43 years. By the end of 1994, there were more than 78 000 UN peacekeepers deployed around the globe — of whom over 10 000 were civilians. The increased demand for peacekeepers was due in part to an intensification of regional and local conflict. This coincided with an increased willingness by UN Security Council members to use peacekeeping as a central instrument of conflict management.

Reconstitution of governing institutions, elections monitoring and reduction of weapons stocks are but a few of the new missions in which peacekeepers are now engaged. In addition, an element of force is increasingly being introduced into Security Council resolutions mandating peacekeeping operations.

The sharp rise in the number of peacekeeping missions and the multiplication of peacekeepers' tasks pose numerous challenges for the UN and its member states. Some of these challenges are political, as the international community takes on responsibility for situations that were hitherto the internal affairs of the states involved. Others are military, as soldiers become involved in missions as dangerous as they are complex. Still others are financial, as operations come to involve tens of thousands of people, rather than the few thousands of yesteryear. The costs of peacekeeping have escalated to the point where they are considerably higher than the regular UN budget.

The UN does not presently have the human, financial or technical resources to keep up with the growing demand for peacekeeping. While the UN must continue to play the central role, regional organizations and groups can assist. Such organizations are often politically and culturally closer to the sources of insecurity and therefore have a direct interest in trying to prevent tensions from escalating into conflicts. Although most regional organizations lack the capability to mount peacekeeping operations on their own, they can undertake conflict prevention measures and preventive diplomacy initiatives that might reduce the need for peacekeeping. In cases where peacekeeping is required, regional organizations can strengthen co-operation among their members involved in the operation, thus enhancing overall effectiveness.

"[I]f the international community should do anything, it must learn from... and take the necessary steps to mandate and equip the UN to become the crisis manager in a world where conflict and humanitarian disasters appear to be a growing trend."

Major-General Roméo Dallaire,
Former Force Commander,
United Nations Assistance
Mission In Rwanda