

POSTSCRIPT

The end of the Cold War and the relative success of Operation Desert Storm, induced a sense of euphoria that the international community was geared to deal with dangers to international peace and security in a more effective manner than before. However, the experiences of Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, and those in some of the former republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union, quickly dispelled these expectations, and in fact, may well have induced a sense of retrenchment in regard to peace operations. Even so, there can be hardly any doubt, that as and when new conflict situations arise, the international community and the belligerents, will turn to the United Nations for attempts at resolution. Hence operations for the maintenance of international peace and security will continue to be required, and must therefore continue to receive the attention they deserve, both in terms of political support, and military preparation.

International peace operations whether under the aegis of the United Nations, regional organizations, or multi-national groupings, are the only answer to conflict resolution, when all else fails. But it must be emphasized that the root of most conflict lies in deprivation in society, and to that extent, maybe some early investment in potential conflict areas towards building society, would be more cost effective. In this context, as stressed earlier, maximum efforts need to be directed towards preventive action by the international community; in this effort, whether it should be the United Nations or regional organizations, is a matter of statesmanship.

As we look into the 21st century, it is essential that we do not allow the perceived inadequacies of some recent operations to cloud our judgement, and swing from one extreme of attempting to undertake too much, to undertaking too little. There is so much the international community can do to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, and there is no way it can absolve itself of that responsibility.

¹ It is a matter of historical record that after the Dayton Agreement when NATO forces were deployed into Bosnia-Herzegovina, the numbers approximated 60,000

² I recall discussing this aspect with my then Chief of Staff, Lewis Mackenzie of Canada, a veteran of a number of earlier UN operations. My impression of overstaffing of the headquarters was quickly revised in a matter of days, when it dawned on us that almost forty per cent of the staff were just nice guys, who were incapable of effective staff work because of lack of knowledge of the working language (English) or of UN procedures.

³ The coordination between humanitarian and military activities is an important matter which is dealt with in Chapter 6.

⁴⁴ In the Congo in the early sixties the forces constituting ONUC effectively used military force to deal with secessionist elements and mercenaries. Similarly, in Cambodia and in Somalia in the early nineties, escort parties from the UN contingents used force to deal with ambushes laid by warring groups and inflicted casualties on them. The aspect to note here being that use of such force was unbiased in application, which therefore did not adversely affect the credibility of the missions. In the most recent incident of such application in August 2000, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, after having displayed great restraint and patience for weeks, during which mission personnel were held hostage or their free movement denied by the Revolutionary United Front, finally resorted to a most professional military operation to deal with the situation.