



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

Post-Cold War Peace Operations

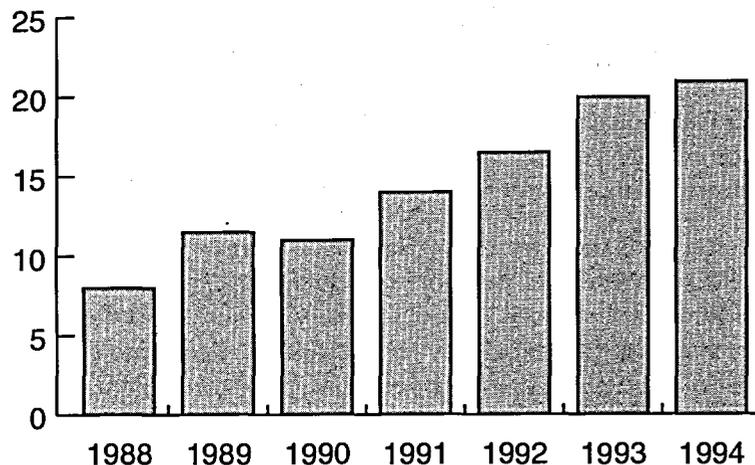
The peace operations of the United Nations have increased in size, scope and number since the end of the Cold War, reflecting new expectations that the UN should play a pivotal role in the emerging global security system. Yet the results have been mixed. Of the more than 20 missions launched since 1988, there have been both solid successes and troublesome failures.

The successes stem, in large part, from recent improvements in how the UN undertakes peace operations. These range from greater political understanding of the concept of peace operations among Member States, to enhancement of the means available to the Secretary-General within his Secretariat, to a growing organizational and operational sophistication in the field. As it demonstrated in Central America, Namibia, Cambodia and Mozambique, the UN has been able to handle complexity with adequate time for preparation and resources for deployment. On the other hand, the number of failures or ambiguous outcomes is distressing. The reasons have much to do with the high expectations that have been placed on an organization that is over-stretched and under-funded, as well as lacking in some of the most fundamental requirements needed to cope in a new era.

A key problem, apparent in a number of recent operations, is the often torpid response of the UN to emerging crises. Whatever the nature of the requirement (e.g., to shore up a recently-concluded peace settlement with the deployment of observers, or to send a force to help stabilize a rapidly-eroding security situation), the track record of the UN has often not matched needs with speed of deployment and numbers on the ground. While some operations, of course, do not require speedy preparation and deployment, what is most noticeable in today's peace operations is the inability of the UN to meet reasonable targets of rapid response.

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United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations Total Number of Active Missions, 1988-1994



Total Percentage Growth 1988-1994 = 186%
Average Annual Growth = 20%

Source: DPKO, 1994