

A Stronger United Nations For the Future

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U.N. peacekeepers are not peacemakers. They are armed, but lightly and only for their own protection. They cannot use force to stop factions, such as the somalian clans, from fighting. Peacekeepers in Yugoslavia, for instance, have not been able to stop the bloodshed there. They serve mainly as observers and mediators.

In recent years, the U.N. has expanded its peacekeeping role. There are a total of 60,000 peacekeepers stretched thin across thirteen countries of the world. They are dispatched by the U.N. Security Council, unless a member country casts the veto.

Peacekeeping has become expensive. It costs \$3 billion a year, about a third of which is paid by the U.S. Some members of congress want to reduce the U.S. share for the future.

Some observers think the rules of peacekeeping are changing and add that the United Nations has not recognized this fact. In the past, the U. N. has run peacekeeping operations on a shoestring budget, using only a handful of people with little or no military

experience. Communications were often poor, and intelligence about conditions on the ground was incomplete. But by March 1993, major plans were underway to vastly improve the operations and international effectiveness of the U.N. peacekeeping efforts.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had strong support, urged more muscle for U.N. peacekeepers. He envisioned a standing force that would be maintained by member countries. Units, which would be on forty-eight hour call, would have the authority to enforce peace militarily. The U.N. headquarters in New York City would create a twenty-four-hour-a-day war room that would be in constant touch with forces around the world and would act as a central nerve center for all operations.

The complexity of U.N. involvement in operations for places such as Yugoslavia and Somalia made it clear that U.N. peacekeeping improvements needed to be made. In this way, Somalia actually helped the United Nations to become stronger, rather than the other way around.