

Commission of Inquiry
into the Deployment of
Canadian Forces to Somalia



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sur le déploiement des
Forces canadiennes en Somalie

Somalia and the Changing Nature of Peacekeeping The Implications for Canada

a study prepared for
the Commission
of Inquiry into
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Canadian Forces
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Allen G. Sens



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Introduction and Executive Summary

This study was commissioned as an independent research project under the auspices of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia (the Somalia Inquiry).¹ The intent of the study is to provide an analysis of the changing nature of United Nations peacekeeping operations (UN PKOs) and the implications for Canadian peacekeeping efforts, with a special emphasis on the Somalia experience. The study examines the wider context for deployment of Canadian Joint Force Somalia (CJFS) to reveal the structural factors or explanations pertinent to the Inquiry's terms of reference. It is not an investigation of specific incidents or activities of the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group (CARBG) and the death and injury of Somali nationals. Rather, it is an examination of the larger issues surrounding UN PKOs and the UN experience in Somalia. This examination is intended to reveal the structural context in which the incidents took place and what role (if any) these structural factors played in the incidents under investigation by the Inquiry.

Accordingly, the study is organized around the following questions:

- What were the conventions of traditional peacekeeping, and how were they rooted in the nature of the Cold War?
- How has the changing nature of conflict affected conflict management efforts and instruments, and how might it continue to do so?
- How have peacekeeping operations changed?
- What are the lessons and implications of the UN effort in Somalia?
- What are the implications of the changing nature of peacekeeping and the Somalia experience for Canada?
- What trends can be identified that have implications for the future of peacekeeping?
- What will be required to respond to these trends?

Each of the five chapters in this study has a clearly defined subject, and each reaches observations and conclusions that build on the discussion in previous chapters. The conclusions are highlighted in the summaries at the end of each chapter.

Chapter 1 examines the development and evolution of traditional UN PKOs and the characteristics that came to define them. The central argument is that traditional peacekeeping was shaped by the character of regional conflicts during the Cold War and by the constraints imposed on the UN system. As an improvised method of conflict management, the conventions of traditional peacekeeping reflected the needs and constraints of the time.

However, Chapter 2 reveals how conflict has evolved since the early days of the Cold War, with a special emphasis on the surge in post-Cold War regional conflicts. The changing qualities of conflict have posed a challenge to existing conflict management instruments, especially peacekeeping, which were developed to manage different types of conflicts under a different set of international conditions. The chapter explores the extent to which future conflicts are likely to acquire new qualities, which must be anticipated as much as possible if conflict management efforts are to be suited to the task of responding to them.

Chapter 3 is devoted to evaluating how UN PKOs have changed in an effort to adapt to the changing qualities of contemporary conflicts identified in Chapter 2. The central theme of the chapter is that operations in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Somalia tried to build on the success of traditional peacekeeping, but in doing so adopted new mandates and methods that created a number of contradictions and inconsistencies between ends and means. The chapter explores the implications of the UN's troubled experience with 'peace enforcement' operations.

Chapter 4 then examines the Somalia mission in greater detail as a case study of the themes outlined in Chapter 3. The chapter highlights several lessons and implications that emerged from this experience with peacekeeping under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The chapter argues that the UN operation mounted in Somalia was seriously flawed in several important respects and goes on to highlight some of the implications of this troubled operation.

Canadian peacekeeping policy is the focus of Chapter 5. The role peacekeeping has played in Canadian foreign and defence policy is explored. The implications of the changing nature of peacekeeping, discussed in Chapter 3, are discussed here in the Canadian context. The Canadian deployment to Somalia is explored, and the implications of the Somalia

experience are highlighted. The chapter offers some recommendations for future Canadian involvement in UN peace operations.

The study reaches the following general conclusions:

- The misapplication of force is a serious obstacle to the success of UN PKOs. The attempt to use force to compel, coerce, or otherwise intimidate warring factions in an intrastate conflict, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies, to protect refugee populations, or to terminate hostilities and establish a political resolution is at odds with the United Nations' ability to act as an instrument of peace and stability. In attempting to rectify one of the perceived deficiencies of UN PKOs in 'less permissive' environments — the lack of sufficient force — the UN has undercut many of the other elements that enabled UN PKOs to be effective. Force can be an effective instrument when it is applied in a discriminate and calibrated fashion in support of a coherent mission plan and an effective political process, but this did not occur in Somalia.
- The changing nature of armed conflict has had fundamental implications for the conduct of UN PKOs and will continue to do so in the future. UN PKOs will continue to encounter an ever-widening range of threats and tasks. Foremost among these will be encounters with different forms of intrastate conflict, ever more sophisticated weapons systems, the advent of information warfare, chemical and biological warfare, and attacks on contributing countries. A key to the success of future UN operations will be the extent to which these and other new challenges are anticipated and prepared for.
- Canada's peacekeeping policy has been affected by the changed nature of peacekeeping and the reality of domestic fiscal constraints. Nevertheless, Canada should continue to participate in UN operations. At the same time, however, Canada must take steps to reduce the overstretch of the Canadian Armed Forces. To reconcile demand with limited resources, Canada should enhance its capacity to deploy smaller military and/or civilian formations with specialized capabilities to fill niche roles within UN missions when regular infantry formations are not available for expeditionary missions. Furthermore, although military training provides the essential foundation, or prerequisite, for effective peacekeepers, the expanding range of threats and tasks and the localized nature of contemporary conflicts require that peacekeeping training and mission-specific training be enhanced.

- **The incidents under investigation by the Somalia Inquiry cannot be explained fully or adequately by the structural or contextual factors examined in this study. Explanations derived from the individual or group level of analysis would be more effective in establishing the immediate causes of these incidents. However, the study concludes that structural factors did play a role in creating the conditions for (or the permissive causes of) the incidents under investigation, in the form of the overstretch of the Canadian Armed Forces in the face of the demand for peacekeeping contingents.**

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Conclusions

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Core Arguments Made and Central Lessons Highlighted

The First Lesson: Peace Enforcement Operations are Qualitatively Different from Traditional Peacekeeping Operations. This study has sought to clarify the distinctions between traditional peacekeeping operations and peace enforcement operations. The study argued that the evolution of traditional peacekeeping was influenced or conditioned by several structural factors, most notably the constraints of the UN system, the political constraints imposed on that system by the Cold War, and the nature of international conflict in the post-war world.

Peacekeeping may have been an improvised activity, but it reflected a set of systemic constraints and the practical compromises that were required to overcome them. The result was a conflict management instrument that relied on the consent of the parties, was lightly armed, non-hostile and impartial, and was deployed in support of a peace that was already in place. However, as the UN became engaged in conflicts where such conditions could not be met, the mandates, methods, and means of traditional peacekeeping proved unsuitable.

The UN then tried to improvise, increasing the size and scope of its involvement, escalating its use of force, and contracting out to the United States (Somalia) or regional organizations (Yugoslavia). There were no doctrines, modalities, or established conventions of operation in place. As a result, the UN was operating at first in an inappropriate conceptual space, trying to apply the conventions of traditional peacekeeping to a very different setting, then in a conceptual vacuum, as it tried to adapt its efforts to new conditions. In the absence of a coherent conceptual plan, the UN began to rely increasingly on uses of force that were not effectively linked to a larger political framework or process. The UN then lost

the basis of its effectiveness as a conflict management instrument: the support of the warring factions, its impartiality, and the distinctiveness of its presence as a non-combatant party.

The principal lesson to be drawn from this examination of the genesis of peacekeeping is that the enterprise of peacekeeping, like any conflict management instrument, reflects both the political environment and the conflict environment in which it is developed. If a conflict management instrument — such as traditional peacekeeping — is applied to a situation that differs from certain proscribed characteristics, it will be unsuited to the problems at hand. Major changes in the political environment or conflict environment require new concepts and modes of operation, which must be established and in place to be successful.

A Second Lesson: The Character of International Conflict Continues to Evolve, with Implications for Conflict Management. Since the end of the Second World War, changes in the nature and style of warfare have continued to challenge prevailing war-fighting doctrines and conflict management techniques. The decolonization experience and the development of insurgency warfare were one such challenge, while the character of contemporary ethnic, religious, and factional warfare is another challenge. These conflicts take place within, rather than among states, are very localized, with a poor distinction between combatant and non-combatant, and reflect deep historical and cultural factors. They are characterized by small-unit operations, often outside political control, and tend to be prolonged struggles.

It should be taken as a given that the nature and style of warfare will continue to evolve. As a result, conflict management efforts will also have to adjust and be prepared for a wide range of possible developments. Such developments might include some combination of the following:

- the spillover of current conflicts, requiring preventive deployments;
- the outbreak of revolutionary wars between states and sub-state groups, requiring conflict management between governments and revolutionary movements, or between revolutionary factions;
- the frequent outbreak of ethnic, religious, and factional conflict originating in poverty, environmental degradation, and the political, economic, and social collapse of states;
- the use of chemical or biological weapons, requiring both defensive measures and decontamination efforts;
- the use of high-technology weapons and heavy support weapons (particularly missiles), requiring defensive countermeasures or pre-emption;

- terrorist attacks on countries contributing to conflict management efforts, requiring higher levels of domestic security;
- the use of disinformation and propaganda to discredit conflict management efforts, requiring improved information dissemination and counter-propaganda capabilities;
- the use of terrorist or urban guerrilla techniques, by factions opposed to conflict management efforts requiring improved operational security;
- the incitement of riots, requiring improved crowd control and non-lethal weapons capabilities; and
- the use of intimidation, threats, and henchmen by local officials or organized crime to coerce local populations to resist efforts toward peace or reconciliation, requiring more effective policing capabilities.

Peacekeeping or interventionary personnel will come under a wider range of threats, and these threats will not necessarily be confined to the local theatre but may extend to the home territory of contributing countries as well. This is because of the increasing tendency of one or more factions in a conflict coming to regard the UN and its contingents as a hostile force, rather than a neutral peacemaker.

A Third Lesson: Traditional Peacekeeping is Not Irrelevant or Obsolete. Despite the high profile of peace enforcement operations, traditional peacekeeping remains a valuable conflict management instrument in suitable situations and environments. Unfortunately, the highly publicized troubles encountered by UN peace enforcement operations have also stained traditional peacekeeping efforts and the UN itself.

Governments and publics in contributor countries must be reminded of the effectiveness of traditional peacekeeping missions under certain conditions. A misinformed association of peace enforcement missions with traditional peacekeeping missions could compromise the future of what has been an effective conflict management instrument.

A Fourth Lesson: The More Multi-Component the Mission, the More Diverse the Requirements. To respond to internal ethno-religious conflicts, a new instrument was required. No model or doctrine existed for a new instrument, so the UN was compelled to improvise, just as traditional peacekeeping itself had been an improvisation. The UN attempted to build on existing peacekeeping conventions by buttressing UN missions with broader mandates authorizing a wider range of actions, including the application of force, that could be used to secure the mission's

objectives. UN missions became larger and less dependent on universal consent, contingents were more heavily armed and used force with greater frequency, and a wider variety of tasks were undertaken. These missions were deployed without a peace in place; part of their mission was to try to establish a peace. In addition, some UN missions took on national reconstruction or peace-building roles, which represented a qualitative change from the more limited developmental scope and breadth of earlier missions.

The lesson of this development is that in the future, irrespective of whether UN missions are mounted under traditional peacekeeping or peacemaking precepts, UN personnel will be performing a much wider array of tasks than they did in the past. Broader and more numerous mission tasks require a change in the composition of peacekeeping forces. Military personnel will continue to be crucial. However, these personnel will be performing a wider range of tasks that will demand enhanced functional capabilities and training. Furthermore, UN missions will require the increasing involvement of civilians and NGOs and, above all, a higher level of co-ordination between military and civilian elements.

A Fifth Lesson: The Dangers of Overambition. The UN effort in Somalia illustrates the dangers that can befall any mission that has extremely far-ranging and long-term goals. In Somalia, the UN was attempting to mediate between the factions while deploying military force to buttress political agreements, aiding relief operations, and engaging in national reconstruction. Within Somalia, this led to unrealistic expectations of what the UN would be able to achieve, while outside Somalia it established a set of unreasonable criteria on which to evaluate success.

Somalia demonstrated the inherent limitations of the UN, especially with respect to funding, expertise, and the support of member states. Greater attention must be paid in the future to establishing mission goals that are attainable in light of the UN's fiscal and material resources and the commitment of member states to that mission.

A Sixth Lesson: The Importance of an Integrated Political and Military Concept of Operations. The Somalia case study reveals the hazards inherent in any failure to develop a clear operational concept for the conduct of a mission, one that establishes a clear relationship between the political environment, mission goals, mission mandates, and means. In Somalia, the UN was learning and adapting as the mission progressed. The result was escalating mandates, the UNITAF operation, different conceptions of mission aims among contributing countries, and an effort to

use military force in the absence of a clearly established political formula understood among the UN contributors and Somalia's factions. The UN mission in Somalia lacked the focus and coherence required to match ends with means and to establish guidelines for operating in such an unstable and dangerous environment.

A Seventh Lesson: The Dangers of the Use of Force. One of the most important lessons of the Somalia experience is the dangers inherent in a more robust application of force by a UN mission, particularly when a larger political framework is not in place or is unclear. Force was misapplied by the UN in Somalia. Firepower was deployed without a requisite level of selectivity and discrimination. This had the effect of turning local sentiment against the UN in several instances, and this led to the increasing perception of the UN as a participant (and for some, a justifiable target) in the conflict. This in turn compromised the UN's ability to act as a sufficiently neutral third party in political conflict management efforts.

On the ground, this conceptualization of UN personnel as 'enemies' or 'hostiles' removed barriers shielding UN personnel from mistreatment or attack. In such an environment, UN personnel react understandably; they in turn regard the locals as 'enemies' and undertake efforts to protect themselves, efforts that serve to undermine further their status as neutrals and reinforce or create a siege or war-zone mentality.

Somalia demonstrated how the use of force can undercut the foundation of the larger political mission of the UN in such conflicts. This is not to argue that force cannot be a useful and effective instrument in many circumstances. However, force must be applied only in a discriminate and calibrated fashion, in support of a coherent political framework, to avoid compromising the overall political position of the UN and local perceptions of the status of a mission.

Implications for the Investigation into the Belet Huen Incidents

This study identified three possible levels of explanation for the incidents involving members of the CARBG in Somalia. First, an individual level explanation would regard the incidents as the result of the misconduct and personal qualities of the few soldiers involved. A group level explanation would regard the incidents as the result of a culture inside the CAR that cultivated group loyalty, racism and indiscipline, and resistance to change. A structural level explanation would regard the incidents as the result of factors concerning the nature of the mission and the

environment encountered by the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole. This study has sought to explore only the extent to which the structural level had any bearing on the incidents involving members of the CARBG.

The study concludes that structural factors in the form of the overstretched nature of the Canadian Armed Forces did contribute to the permissive causes of the incidents in Somalia. However, structural factors were not the necessary, sufficient, or efficient causes of the incidents. The central explanations for these incidents lie at the individual or group level of analysis, not at the level of structure.

Implications for Canada and Future UN Peace Operations

While the end of the Cold War removed the strategic rationale for Canada's peacekeeping endeavours, it did not remove the foreign policy rationales. Peacekeeping remains a valuable enterprise for Canada. However, the demands of UN peace operations — in terms of their frequency and intensity — led to the overstretch of the Canadian Armed Forces with respect to their expeditionary capabilities. Although the demands placed on the land forces have been reduced recently, the government's standing commitment to the UN, coupled with shrinking defence budgets, means that the structural conditions of overstretch remain in place.

This study suggested that while Canada should continue to participate in a broad range of UN missions, including peace enforcement operations, its capacity to contribute troops to expeditionary missions will continue to be limited and will come under pressure again in the future. The broader range of tasks being conducted by UN missions provides an opportunity for Canada to furnish specialized military and civilian personnel and capabilities to UN operations when regular infantry units are not available. Canada should not turn away from contributing battalions or battle groups to UN missions. When such units are not available, however, Canada should take steps to establish a capability to send smaller numbers of specialized personnel to perform certain important functional or niche roles in UN peace operations. The study also suggested that the Canadian forces enhance their supplementary peacekeeping training and improve unique-to-mission training, particularly with respect to social and cultural factors and the implications of individual actions in these social and cultural environments.

A FINAL WORD

As indicated in the introduction and executive summary, this study has sought to do more than merely describe the changed character of many contemporary UN operations. To this end, the study has reached a number of conclusions based on an examination of the changing nature of armed conflict, the changing nature of peacekeeping efforts, the lessons specific to the experience of Somalia, and the relevance of these developments for Canada. The study therefore has a descriptive and a prescriptive component. The descriptive component of the study intends to inform; the prescriptive component intends to provoke thought about future missions. To the extent the incidents at the centre of the Somalia Inquiry's mandate were caused by structural factors, a recognition of the need to alleviate these conditions and account for possible threats and obstacles in future environments will assist in anticipating and preparing for future challenges. This will reduce the prospects that misunderstanding, misapplication of techniques or capabilities, the development of suspicion and hostility between locals and UN personnel, and ad hoc, improvisational solutions to difficult problems will contribute to the future mistreatment of UN personnel or the mistreatment of local peoples by UN personnel.

Somalia and the Changing Nature of Peacekeeping: The Implications for Canada

Allen G. Sens

This study examines the changing nature of UN peacekeeping operations, with particular emphasis on the Somalia experience. The study also explores the implications of the changing nature of peacekeeping for Canadian foreign and defence policy. The author concludes that structural factors in the form of the changing nature of peacekeeping operations cannot fully or adequately explain the incidents of misconduct by members of the Canadian Airborne Battle Group in Somalia. The author recommends that Canada continue to participate in UN peacekeeping operations as they remain consistent with Canadian foreign policy interests in the post-Cold War world. However, in order to reconcile future demand with increasingly limited resources, Canada should expand its capacity to deploy smaller military and/or civilian formations with specialized capabilities to fill niche roles within UN missions when regular formed units are unavailable for expeditionary duties.

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