

Evolving Band-Aids to Global Crisis: For Want of U.S. Leadership

by Mark Sweberg and Allan Childers

Change is in the wind for the U.S. Army. Indeed, it is in the wind for all the Services as the strategic focus of the U.S. shifts from Europe to the Pacific and as the military adjusts from its engagement in two regional wars. This article focuses on the Army's future. Iraq and Afghanistan are virtually military history. So what's next? That seems to be the \$572 billion question.

In an article recently published in *USA Today*, Tom Vanden Brook talks about "smaller military plans for a nimble, expeditionary future."¹ His article outlines what might be in store for the Army after the leadership was told to plan for a force that is 100,000 Soldiers smaller than it is today. A smaller force and realigned capabilities bring into focus a need for closer and more synergistic collaboration with global friends and allies.

Against this backdrop, the world is witnessing a resurgence of Cold War-type political-militancy through major power direct and indirect activism. Between them, Russia and China are redrawing established geopolitical and internationally recognized land borders in Eastern Europe. China, for its part, is actively working to change or modify the rights and responsibilities of other nations in the South and East China Seas, respectively, as it takes unilateral actions to establish ownership or dominance over island groups and potential riches in oil and minerals in these areas. Policymakers and strategists design bilateral, multilateral, and multinational solutions using regional agencies. The UN calls for calm and restraint in each area of rising tensions, neutered by the failure of the U.S. and major powers to prescribe any UN peacekeeping or peacemaking actions.

In the past, a number of presidents have acknowledged the need for the military to work closer with the UN in responding to international crises. This has not happened. While the military, and especially the Army, have traditionally resisted such collaboration, it may be time to revisit the

Mark Sweberg is the owner of Sweberg Consulting, a firm focused on defense and foreign policy issues. Sweberg has over 30 years' experience working on government domestic and foreign policy, programs, and operations both as an Army officer and defense contractor.

Allan Childers is a partner and the Chief Operating Officer of Sweberg Consulting. Childers is a retired Air Force colonel with more than 30 years' experience working on government domestic and foreign policy, programs, and operations, both as an Air Force officer and defense contractor.

U.S. military's contribution to global defense strategies. Several years ago, the Department of Defense (DoD) learned force reductions were coming, and the U.S. would no longer maintain forces large enough to wage stability operations such as Afghanistan and Iraq. America's policymakers and strategists are seeking to fill the gaps that will occur by calling on regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to strengthen their capabilities for defense, diplomacy, and development responses to crises.

White House policymakers have not specified how the Army should be configured to deal with various conflicts. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel wants an agile force equipped with the latest technologies. History has shown that conflicts rarely occur in the places or under the circumstances the Army expects or plans

Without increased U.S. collaboration in the defense portion of a comprehensive approach, global conflict mitigation structures have fallen to their weakest point since the end of World War II.

for. The swing to the Pacific seems premature with NATO's apparent inability to respond to the annexation of Crimea and further Russian instigations in Ukraine and other eastern European nations. At the same time, it seems the swing may be too late for current ASEAN capacities to respond to China's apparent attempts at "annexation" of islands and territorial waters in the South China Sea.

President Obama said several years ago that the Army would no longer support stability

operations; however, in his 2014 State of the Union address he said, "our leadership is defined not just by our defense against threats, but by the enormous opportunities to do good and promote understanding around the globe—to forge greater cooperation, to expand new markets, to free people from fear and want." These statements support a comprehensive approach that combines all the elements of national power—the 3 Ds of defense, diplomacy, and development—in a mix optimized to each individual situation. Included in this mix should be a clear plan and intent to cooperate with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) on future conflicts and crises.

America is failing to participate in the most important period of conflict mitigation evolution of the twenty-first century. Despite resistance from isolationists, Americans regularly support global diplomacy and development processes and programs. However, America risks its global superpower status by not participating in the entire comprehensive approach that commits defense alongside development and diplomacy to global stability and security structures. Without increased U.S. collaboration in the defense portion of a comprehensive approach, global conflict mitigation structures have fallen to their weakest point since the end of World War II. This is evidenced by the disarray of responses to conflicts in the Middle East and Asia and global terrorism—but particularly in addressing multiple violent conflicts in Africa.

The intensity of current conflicts is not diminishing despite contrary claims. Over 214,490 international soldiers are engaged in international peace efforts focused more on cross-border terrorism than on wars between states. More than 89,000 UN-sponsored soldiers and over 121,000 soldiers from organizations other than the UN are currently deployed. There are 23 active UN missions, such as stabilization missions MINUSTAH (*Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti*) in Haiti

and MONUSCO (*Mission de l'Organisation de Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Democratique du Congo*) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. There are over 33 non-UN missions, including the European Union (EU) missions in Libya, Moldova, Georgia, and Lebanon; the independent Multi-National Force and Observers mission in the Sinai; and the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) missions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan.

At the time of this writing, there are a total of 17 U.S. military personnel globally supporting UN peacekeeping operations as liaisons, observers, and staff officers. That is 17, not 1,700, not 17,000. Countries prefer to see UN-mandated missions in crisis areas.

The UN is not the “flavor du jour” because it has neither the resources nor the authorizations to conduct all operations, so other organizations, such as the OSCE and the EU become involved. In probably the most troubled region in the world, the African Union (AU) is increasingly taking the lead. But the AU is challenged by the reality that member nations are among the poorest in the world whose armies lack the capacity (equipment and training) to be effective.

In the twenty-first century, regional threats and responses are more violent and genocidal. While this is not wholly a result of America’s reticence to lead multinational combat power projection or offer significant troop contributions to multinational efforts, the fact that the U.S. is not involved is a factor. The U.S. has chosen instead to provide overwhelming U.S. force via a cobbled-together collection of forces from traditional allied nations where strategic interests are clearly identified or threatened (e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan). In crises that demand an international military response, the U.S. offers money and conditional support to other nations who participate in military

coalitions under the UN flag. On those rare occasions when the U.S. involves itself more directly, it seeks to do so in coalitions with its NATO allies or other coalitions of states where the U.S. can lead or significantly influence.

At the time of this writing, there are a total of 17 U.S. military personnel globally supporting UN peacekeeping operations as liaisons, observers, and staff officers. That is 17, not 1,700, not 17,000.

On September 11, 1990, President George H.W. Bush envisioned a new world order—“a world where the United Nations, freed from Cold War stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders.” Eleven years later Al Qaeda’s terrorist attack on America prompted his son, President George W. Bush to launch the Global War on Terrorism. While the senior President Bush outlined his vision, American interests in supporting a new world order were viewed as both American imperialism and the beginning of the end of the U.S. as imposed by “a tyrannical collectivist system run by the United Nations.”²

American policymakers adroitly lead, participate in, and share the country’s abundant resources in international diplomacy and development forums affecting humanitarian needs everywhere around the globe. But in the arena of international peace operations, the Nation remains wedded to sharing its enormous military capabilities only when a specific scenario directly affects national security interests or to train another country’s military forces on a bilateral or multilateral basis. American military strategists and planners remain inadequately prepared through policies,

processes, and structures to lead or participate in a response to global crises and regional enemies through integrated international—specifically UN—operations.

America missed several opportunities to lead a global renaissance for stability based on collective security.

America missed several opportunities to lead a global renaissance for stability based on collective security. The UN does not maintain its own military. It must rely on the support of its members to provide military forces when the UN Security Council (UNSC) approves their use. The attempt to restructure international borders at the end of World War II and the subsequent war on the Korean peninsula in 1950 offered immediate opportunities for American forces to become part of a UN-led international military force. The UN Charter gave the UNSC *de facto* authority to use member military forces “to maintain or restore international peace and security” and protect populations from aggression.³

Members of the UNSC, particularly the “Permanent Five” (U.S., Russia, China, Great Britain, and France), allowed their national interests and national prerogatives to take precedence over the need to collectively confront international crises and flash points of conflict. Their leadership or participation in international military force operations became suspect to the point where participation virtually ended. For the next 40 years, military force devolved to peacekeeping by a collective of smaller, less-developed nations who were ill prepared and ill equipped to perform the mission.

The next opportunity occurred when the U.S. joined the international UN military response in the Persian Gulf War of 1990. However, the

zeal to gain a peace dividend through reduction of military forces in America and Russia saw the opportunity for collective security through a permanent international military force to again disappear.

Since then, U.S. policymakers have recognized the need to reintroduce a concept from World War II—a standing UN Rapid Deployment Force. This concept reemerges regularly among academics, former officials, and security experts concerned with the need for a standing, rapid-response UN force. In 2001, the House of Representatives introduced the United Nations Rapid Deployment Act,⁴ however, in the end, the idea died, and the U.S. decided to perform collective military operations through the NATO structure.

In the meantime, UN policymakers deployed peacekeepers—the number in Africa reaching the highest levels in history. Routinely the number of uniformed peacekeepers easily exceeds 100,000. The U.S. and European nations provide billions of dollars each year to support them.

So why are U.S. policymakers and strategists not building the capacity and capabilities of the UN to respond to current regional crises? The UN has no shortage of integrators for defense, diplomacy, and development response. The UNDPKO’s role is to provide “political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations around the world and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates.”⁵ UNDPKO is the integrator for UN defense and diplomacy operations.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “facilitates dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors” by establishing humanitarian civil-military coordination structures.⁶ Still, UN forces often fail to prevent violence because the nations often are ill equipped and totally ill prepared to

conduct the mission. Training standards differ widely among contributing countries despite efforts by UNDPKO to standardize them, and equipment is often incompatible among participating military forces within a UN operation. There are also often incompatible rules of engagement (ROE). Some country forces are proscribed from using deadly force regardless of circumstances, and others are more flexible.

Unlike a time when a contributing country sent soldiers and officers who had no uniforms, equipment, or shoes, there have been significant improvements. Units now show up equipped and fairly well trained. However, richer nations remain satisfied to send money, uniforms, and the most basic of equipment. As a result, internal conflicts continue to boil, as thousands of civilians are killed and hundreds of thousands more are displaced. Worse, the underlying causes of crisis and conflict are not addressed, and people continue to die or become homeless and displaced. The evolving geopolitical response to current crises in Africa is to send troops mostly comprised of soldiers from Africa and developing countries such as India, Pakistan, and Fiji. Although the U.S. and Europe pledge financial and equipment support, they often neglect to follow through on their pledges. The missions are hobbled by the lack of adequate resources and conflicting national definitions of the ROE. The defense mission is further complicated by the inability of too many Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSG) to fully appreciate or understand the military realities they face. These SRSGs may have military advisers and military force commanders, but they themselves are political animals who lack military experience.

So, as U.S. reduces its military force structure, why would its leaders commit the country's superpower military force to international stability in support of UN operations? The *Realpolitik* answer is for

selfish reasons. The U.S. military needs to learn lessons and gain UN expertise by engaging in these type missions so its forces can better mitigate the conflicts that affect national security interests in the future.⁷ Participating in UN military operations is about participating in the evolution in global events. For this reason, America must engage comprehensively and globally more often through internationally-sanctioned operations rather than unilateral

America must engage comprehensively and globally more often through internationally-sanctioned operations rather than unilateral action.

action. The U.S. military already participates in developing doctrine and other UN military guidance documents, regulations, and operations plans. A U.S. general officer, who also serves as Director, J5, Strategic Plans and Policy, Joint Staff, represents the U.S. on the UN Military Staff Committee (MSC), whose role is to plan UN military operations⁸ and assist in the regulation of armaments.⁹ In reality, the MSC was emasculated during the Cold War and never met the original goal.

Many nations around the world, including developed nations, will not send their forces beyond their borders unless they are under the auspices of the UN. Many nations also focus their military training on UN-inspired capabilities in order to be prepared to serve in UN peace operations. The U.S. military is disconnected because it does not train for UN operations and is not prepared to work in harmony with military forces from these countries.

UN missions have evolved from peace operations to peace enforcement, to peacekeeping, to robust peacekeeping, to

humanitarian crisis and conflict prevention. The two most recent robust peacekeeping and crisis/conflict prevention operations occurred during the past 15 years and are the genesis of a call for increased U.S. military forces participation. In 2000, the Brahimi Report referred to the need for “robust peacekeeping forces” to prevail in situations like Rwanda and Srebrenica when UN peacekeepers observed rather than stopped humanitarian crises driven by warring factions.¹⁰ Now the majority of UN peacekeeping resolutions authorize UN forces to use all “necessary means to protect civilians when under imminent threat of physical violence.”¹¹

...U.S. policymakers still want to play only in those sandboxes defined as national security interests...

What is the option available between today’s approach and increased U.S. leadership? The answer appears to be mercenaries. The UN turned increasingly to contracting private military and security companies to provide the defense leg of the comprehensive approach to stabilizing nations where host countries are unable to provide security. The solution is problematic because of the lack of global regulation, oversight mechanisms, accountability for human rights violations, and a host of other factors.¹² It must be difficult for U.S. military leaders to swallow a solution that finds mercenaries preferable to military forces when upholding American ideals through active participation in UN operations.

Africa remains a low priority politically in the U.S. and in Europe despite platitudes to the contrary and despite watching millions die and the continental turmoil increasingly threatening U.S. interests. The UN was

established sixty-six years ago, and the world community still cannot agree on what role the world organization should and can play where instability and conflict reigns. Rather than lead the mobilization of global stability through the UN, U.S. policymakers still want to play only in those sandboxes defined as national security interests rather than recognizing that global stability managed through a world organization supports—not challenges—American national security interests. Unless U.S. policymakers define an international conflict as directly and immediately impacting American interests, they will not commit U.S. forces to a response. Most other wealthier nations of the world do the same.

Everyone wants to distance themselves from Africa. So when the UNSC determines something must be done, it sends UN-sponsored military forces comprised of forces usually from developing countries. They invariably arrive with not enough troops, not enough equipment, a vague or weak mandate, and leadership that must first turn to their own home governments for guidance before going to the UN.

What should amaze every U.S. and UN policymaker is that more UN peacekeepers are not killed. The main reason can probably be attributed to the leadership of mid-level (e.g., battalion) commanders from the contributing countries. UN policymakers charge these commanders with carrying out their missions while keeping their troops alive. There are plenty of exceptional commanders among the forces provided to UN missions despite the challenges they face. U.S. military policymakers should yearn to learn from this type of leadership during a period of reduced resources.

But a commander’s capacity to keep his troops alive does not denote mission success. UN missions fail for the most part because U.S. leadership is lacking in the UNSC, and U.S. military participation is lacking on the front lines. Strong leadership throughout the chain

breeds success. Success breeds further success.

Success means preventing crises in this century from derailing the lessons learned from previous centuries. International integration of ideas, communications, technologies, economies, and an array of other sophisticated concepts have brought stability and prosperity around the globe. It seems, therefore, that U.S. policymakers and strategists should lead, not eschew, the international integration of diplomacy, defense, and development through UN, not regional, structures. **IAJ**

NOTES

1 John Vanden Brook, “Smaller Military Plans for a Nimble, Expeditionary Future,” *USA Today*, January 21, 2014, <<http://www.usatoday.com/story/nation/2014/01/21/smaller-army-shorter-missions/4720049/>>, accessed on May 8, 2014.

2 Chip Berlet, “Dances with Devils: How Apocalyptic and Millennialist Themes Influence Right Wing Scapegoating and Conspiracism,” Political Research Associates, Fall 1998, <http://www.publiceye.org/apocalyptic/Dances_with_Devils_1.html>, accessed on October 10, 2013.

3 Bruce Russett and James S. Sutterlin, “The U.N. in a New World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1991, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/46583/bruce-russett-and-james-s-sutterlin/the-un-in-a-new-world-order>>, accessed on October 10, 2013.

4 United Nations Rapid Deployment Act of 2001, Global Policy Forum homepage, <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/199/40934.html>>, accessed on October 3, 2013.

5 United Nations Peacekeeping, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Peacekeeping homepage, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about/dpko/>>, accessed on October 3, 2013.

6 Ashley Jackson and Simone Haysom, “The Search for Common Ground: Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan, 2002–13,” Humanitarian Policy Group, April 2013, <<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/130424%20The%20Search%20for%20Common%20Ground%20Civ-Mil%20Relations%20in%20Afghanistan%202002-13%20HPG%20Work%20Paper.pdf>>, accessed on October 12, 2013.

7 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), OCHA homepage, <<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/UN-CMCoord/overview>>, accessed on October 3, 2013.

8 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII, Article 26, <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter5.shtml>>, accessed on October 5, 2013.

9 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V, Article 47, <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter5.shtml>>, accessed on October 5, 2013.

10 Lakhdar Brahimi, “Report on the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,” United Nations General Assembly Security Council, August 21, 2000, <<http://www.unrol.org/files/brahimi%20report%20peacekeeping.pdf>>, accessed on October 12, 2013.

11 May be found in many current operations. “Principles of UN Peacekeeping, United Nations Peacekeeping homepage, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/principles.shtml>>, accessed on October 15, 2013.

12 “Experts Call for Proper Oversight of Private Military and Security Firms Working for the UN,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations homepage, September 3, 2013, <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/ExpertsCallforproperoversightofprivatemilitaryandsecurityfirmsWG.aspx>>, accessed on October 15, 2013.