

The Historical Background of United Nations Peacekeeping Efforts

In the post-Cold War era, the operations and objectives of United Nations peacekeeping have changed, with different missions having specific objectives. Prior to 1992, the peacekeeping role of the UN was largely observer missions and peacekeeping forces. The 1992 UN Secretary-General's report, *An Agenda for Peace*, identified the new challenges facing the United Nations. The fourteen new missions created since then have changed "traditional" peacekeeping to much more complex, integrated operations, requiring a combination of political, military and humanitarian action. As former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated, the UN must:

1. through diplomacy remove sources of danger before violence results;
2. engage in peacemaking aimed at resolving issues that have led to conflict;
3. work to preserve peace, however fragile [by] assisting in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers;
4. [help] rebuild the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife;
5. ...address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression...



How does preventive diplomacy work? How can these lofty ideals be converted into practical and useful peacekeeping activities? How can the United Nations monitor human rights, sponsor and supervise elections and work to establish a democratic infrastructure? Let's look at some case studies.

In Haiti, the UN peacekeepers work with members of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti, a project jointly fielded by the UN and the Organization of American States. The UN is increasingly undertaking missions with other regional and intergovernmental organizations. Their work has made a major contribution in human rights and democracy. Huge changes have been accomplished in Haiti ranging from election reform resulting in free and fair elections, to the training of a Haitian national police force to replace the feared and dreaded security forces of the past, to humanitarian assistance in the areas of health, nutrition, agriculture and education. In Haiti, the UN Transition Mission broadcasts over 13 stations, 10 of which are outside Port-au-Prince, the capital city. The Civilian Police assist by bringing cassettes, monitors and VCR's to the most remote villages. In addition, the International Civilian Mission to Haiti uses radio to get the word out on the whole range of the mission's work in human rights, focusing on topics such as summary justice and the treatment of prisoners.



In addition, drugs and medical supplies have been distributed, vaccinations were accomplished and 940,000 needy Haitians were given food. By May, 1995, \$51 billion had been contributed to a fund to help Haitians reconstruct the country and design plans for future development.

In Central America, we have many illustrations of the new peacekeeping of the United Nations. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the UN has worked to monitor human rights and supervise elections. The guerrillas in El Salvador, often very young opposition fighters, have turned in their weapons and agreed to cooperate in guaranteeing the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the people of the country. The UN team of human rights observers has looked into reports of torture and unlawful arrest, documenting abuses. This information, combined with the cease-fire, encouraged Salvadorans to return home after years of living abroad, repopulating villages, building schools and resuming agricultural activities. Nicaragua worked with UN election observers who radioed in