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Lori Fidler Damrosch

Columbia Law School, [damrosch@law.columbia.edu](mailto:damrosch@law.columbia.edu)

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# The Role of the Great Powers in United Nations Peace-Keeping

Lori Fisler Damrosch<sup>†</sup>

Over the past forty-five years, international peace-keeping has developed two principal operational models: the small power model and the big power model. The small power model accounts for virtually all U.N. peace-keeping efforts over more than four decades. However, the big power model is becoming increasingly important to a world which is demanding both symbolism and substance from the United Nations.

Under the small power model, modest, lightly armed contingents from small states are deployed to symbolize international concern rather than to enforce international order. Typically, the participating states have no direct stake in the outcome of the conflict in question and do not aspire to project their own power into the conflict area. Thus, the majority of troops have come from countries such as the Nordic countries, Austria, and Fiji.

This pattern, which purposefully excludes forces from the permanent members of the Security Council and from states specially interested in a conflict from the formation of U.N. peace-keeping contingents, was established by Dag Hammarskjöld during the creation of the first large-scale U.N. peace-keeping force, the U.N. Emergency Force in the Sinai. This force was established in 1956 in response to the Suez crisis, in which Israel and two permanent members of the Security Council, Britain and France, entered and occupied Egyptian territory. The circumstances of the crisis could easily have precipitated the involvement of a third permanent member, the Soviet Union, on Egypt's side. It is thus entirely understandable that all permanent members of the Security Council were deliberately excluded from the U.N. Emergency Force interposed as a buffer along the Egypt-Israeli border when Britain and France withdrew. The precedent took hold as a guideline for all subsequent U.N. peace-keeping operations and it established a pattern that is now thought of as the "traditional" or "classical" model of U.N. peace-keeping. As the practice suggests, U.N. officials have long believed that by following this precedent and forming peace-keeping contingents from the troops of small states, the United Nations could preserve its impartiality and obtain the consent of combatants to the interposition of a U.N. presence.

Under the big power model, strong states deploy enough of their military assets to enforce the objectives of international order. The drafters of the U.N. Charter had this model in mind when they conceived the system of a Security Council dominated by the five strongest powers of the day. It is this model that was applied in the Korean War and in Operation Desert Storm,

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<sup>†</sup> Professor of Law, Columbia University; B.A. (1973) and J.D. (1976), Yale University.

and that is invoked by those who ask why the major powers — the United States, Western Europe, and Russia — have been unable to stop the slaughter in Yugoslavia.

There are two competing versions of the big power model. The first is typified by the Korean War and Operation Desert Storm: a leading power assumes the initiative and undertakes most of the burdens of mounting a large-scale military action, invites participation or contribution from a range of other states, and obtains a Security Council resolution endorsing the collective effort. Although the details may vary, the essence of this version is reliance on the military might of one state that organizes and leads a coalition; co-participants assume a distinctly subordinate role and the United Nations offers little or no supervision apart from the formal resolution authorizing the activity. In other words, the action is essentially unilateral with multilateral imprimatur.

The second version of the big power model is embodied in the Charter-based blueprint which begins with Article 43. This version envisions that pursuant to a network of agreements between the Security Council and member states, national military contingents would be available to serve at the call of the Security Council, under the direction of a Military Staff Committee comprised of representatives of the permanent five. Because of Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, no such agreements were ever negotiated. However, the climate of cooperation among the permanent five which has prevailed over the last several years enhances the chance for the realization of the Charter's original vision.

Among those who have recently lent support to the idea of attempting to invigorate the Article 43 concept are Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in his "Agenda for Peace" report; Senators Biden and Boren; and top foreign policy advisers to the Clinton-Gore campaign, such as Richard Gardner. The attitude of Russia will be of special interest, since former President Gorbachev probably did more than any other world leader to focus attention on the possibility of breathing life into these dormant Charter provisions by mobilizing the cooperative efforts of the permanent five.

I characterize the Article 43 method as a big power approach, even though medium and small powers would be invited to negotiate agreements for putting contingents of their national military forces at the service of the United Nations, because the forces would serve under the authority of the Security Council and because the Council's permanent members probably would have the leading role in deciding what to do with these forces. The salient difference between the Article 43 big power approach and the essentially unilateral big power approach is that under the Article 43 approach the major states would be expected to concert their power to the achievement of collective objectives. Not only could any one of the five veto the use of force,

## *The Role of the Great Powers in U.N. Peace-Keeping*

but more importantly, all or at least most of the five would be actively engaged in each collective effort. In some cases, most of the five might contribute combat-ready forces; even if each did not, however, each would still participate in policy-making and implementation through the Military Staff Committee of the Security Council.

The Article 43 approach has many benefits, and I endorse it. The Article 43 approach would begin the realization of a genuine system of collective security, in which the United States is not the world's policeman but one among a number of contributors to a world police force. It would, or in any event should, be based on principles of equitable sharing of the burdens of preserving and enforcing international peace. It would give effect to the principles of the U.N. Charter as a system of meaningful restraints on power, and it would have controls to safeguard against manipulation by one or a few states who seek to magnify or project their own power. The veto, of course, is one such control.

The remainder of these remarks will focus on the role of several states that should play significant roles in peace-keeping under the Article 43 big power model. The first two, Russia and China, will play an important role by virtue of their positions on the Security Council. The next two, Japan and Germany, hopefully will be active economic supporters of future United Nations peace-keeping efforts. And the final country, Nigeria, will remain an important regional peace-keeper by virtue of its regional political power. As this brief description suggests, the definition of "great powers" in the 1990s is far broader than "superpower" or "Security Council member." Instead, the great powers are all those countries which might be encouraged to participate in collective military action due to their political, economic, or military strength.

First, Russia. As previously noted, former President Gorbachev vigorously advocated a comprehensive program of peace and security through the United Nations. If Russia manages to avoid total preoccupation with its formidable internal problems, it may continue to pursue this agenda in an effort to demonstrate that it can continue to influence global events and that it is prepared to exert its influence in constructive directions. Russia and Ukraine have both sent contingents of peace-keepers to serve with the U.N. Protection Force in Croatia; notably, the United States has not. Russia's motivations undoubtedly include its historical links to the Serbians (in contradistinction to past and present German-Croatian alignments). Nonetheless, it is significant that Russia has manifested its concern for the Serbian population in Croatia by committing tangible support, including ground troops, to the peace-keeping component of the U.N. plan.

Russia's current interest in international peace-keeping has a regional focus as well, due to the fact that there are now fifteen internationally recognized states on the territory of the former Soviet Union. An agreement on peace-

keeping within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States was concluded in July of 1992. It remains to be seen whether this agreement can be implemented in a manner that will mitigate the ferocity of inter-ethnic conflicts while avoiding the specter of continuing Russian imperialism. The non-Russian republics will surely wish to ensure that the world community keeps an eye on intra-CIS conflicts. As such, the Secretary-General's dispatch of representatives to such places as the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan will continue to serve as an important reminder of international concern and oversight.

During this period in which the former Red Army is undergoing profound transformation, the United Nations and its member states should give careful thought to engaging components of the former Soviet military in support of international order. If the former Soviet military is used in peace-keeping operations, its experience may help cultivate within Russia a culture of civilian control over the military. It is true that such a culture has been all but completely lacking to date, but the same could be said of the cultures of constitutionalism, judicial independence, and protection of human rights, all of which are very much in the forefront of Western concern. It is worth noting that the Russian legislature has been taking modest steps toward civilian involvement in military decision-making. Among these steps are the passage of a special bill to authorize the deployment of Russian troops to the U.N. Protection Force in Yugoslavia, and the consideration of framework legislation to govern Russian participation in U.N. peace-keeping.

Second, China. Given its position on the Security Council, China will necessarily be involved in decisions about peace-keeping under any model, including the Article 43 version. So far, the international community has held the threat of a Chinese veto at bay by exerting considerable diplomatic skill and some behind-the-scenes leverage. Nevertheless, China's position on the United Nations' role in internal conflicts, which differs from that of other key players, still renders its veto a meaningful threat. With respect to U.N. responses to conflicts such as those in Yugoslavia or Somalia, China has attached significance to obtaining a formal request or consent to U.N. participation from the representatives of the accredited government in question. China no doubt will continue to resist a non-consent-based role for the United Nations in mitigating the level of violence in an internal conflict.

Third, Japan and Germany. Both Japan and Germany have renunciation-of-war clauses in their constitutions. The application of those clauses to U.N.-sponsored peace-keeping has generated much debate in both countries, especially in light of criticism that their contributions to the defense of Kuwait were nothing more than "checkbook diplomacy." The governments of both countries have since sought authority from their respective legislatures to make more tangible contributions; however, the nature of their contributions

## *The Role of the Great Powers in U.N. Peace-Keeping*

remains highly limited. In the case of Germany, the debate over potential constitutional amendments or legislative solutions is still in progress.

In Japan the Diet passed a peace-keeping operations law in the summer of 1992 which makes Japanese participation in such activities as the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia only barely possible. The Japanese peace-keepers, if any — and there can be only a handful under the numerical limits of the law — could join a U.N. force only with the contemporaneous consent of all parties to a conflict. Furthermore, they would have to withdraw forthwith if a ceasefire broke down. These and other restrictive conditions make it highly unlikely that a Japanese presence could be anything other than merely symbolic.

It is understandable, but not necessarily logical, that the participation of Japanese and German troops in U.N. peace-keeping contingents has become entangled with the issue of changing the composition of the Security Council. There are those who argue that while either or both of these countries might well deserve a permanent or quasi-permanent Council seat by virtue of their political or economic power, they should not be promoted into that exclusive club unless they are willing to commit their military power to U.N. operations as well.

I would decouple these issues. Structural reform of the Security Council may or may not be achievable in the present generation, and Japan and Germany may or may not be the best candidates to benefit from such a reform. In any event, structural reform of the Security Council should not be linked to the entirely separate issue of the optimal contributions of states to U.N. peace-keeping or other forms of collective security. The exclusion of all permanent Security Council members from U.N. peace-keeping forces was the working assumption under the traditional small power model discussed above. And even under a big power model which envisions a greater role for the permanent members of the Security Council, a state like China, which limits its role to sitting on the sidelines, refraining from exercising its veto, and making *de minimis* financial contributions, could still be a permanent member.

Notwithstanding whether Japan and Germany might one day receive permanent seats on the Security Council, their contribution to U.N. peace-keeping may best be limited to "checkbook diplomacy" in view of the particularly painful memories of the military devastation wreaked by these countries not so long ago. If there are political values to be served by pressing for more than monetary contributions, tangible donations from Japan and Germany might come in the form of equipment rather than troops. Moreover, the United Nations should conduct a major reform of the existing assessment scales. These measures will help ensure a more equitable sharing of the burdens of collective security without tampering with constitutional constraints

on military power that are now firmly embedded in the national psyches of Japan and Germany.

Finally, Nigeria. Nigeria is the key actor within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which formed a multinational force in the summer of 1990 to try to bring a halt to the civil war in Liberia. The U.N. Security Council has since lent oblique moral support to the efforts of ECOWAS to resolve the conflict peacefully; however, the Security Council was careful at first not to make any mention, positive or negative, of the military means which ECOWAS had chosen to employ.<sup>1</sup> Given the reluctance of the United Nations to send peace-keeping forces to all conflict sites, an optimum world order cannot ignore the role of predominant regional powers. These states are major powers in their own spheres of influence, and it would be a mistake to ignore them.

It is my expectation that we will need both the big power model and the small power model in our array of options for collective peace-keeping activities in the coming years. They will be needed for different purposes, and they will have differing implications in particular cases. The small power model will remain appropriate for circumstances in which the parties to a conflict have already agreed to a cease-fire and have requested U.N. assistance in carrying it out. The big power model will be necessary to impose solutions against the will of warring parties in either an interstate or an internal conflict. We need only to look at the intractable conflicts currently in progress to understand that the demand for stronger models will inevitably increase rather than diminish.

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1. On November 11, 1992, however, the Security Council adopted a resolution which explicitly commended ECOWAS's efforts and condemned "the continuing armed attacks against the peace-keeping forces of ECOWAS in Liberia by one of the parties to the conflict." U.N. SCOR, 47th Sess., 3138th mtg., at 1, U.N. Doc. S/RES.788 (1992).