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UN Peacekeeping and the 1973 Arab-Israeli Conflict

N. A. Pelcovits

AN UNEXPECTED sequel to the October 1973 war in the Middle East was to bring UN peacekeepers back to the area. Many thought the inglorious departure of the UN Emergency Force I (UNEF I) in May 1967—when U Thant reluctantly recalled the force at Nasser's behest—had not only exposed the fragility of peacekeeping in general but signaled the requiem for serious UN peacekeeping efforts to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Certainly, few imagined that the United Nations would be entrusted with any military mission beyond that of supervising a cease-fire. A UN military presence of sorts had operated on the cease-fire lines after the 1967 war. Some 200 unarmed military observers from the Jerusalem-based UN Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), originally set up to monitor the truce after the 1948 war, were deployed along the Suez Canal and the "forward defended localities" on the Golan. They could do little more than keep score of violations and were by-passed or arrested by advancing troops (as well as sustaining casualties) during the October fighting.

That the United Nations would be enlisted for vital security assignments in backstopping the disengagement arrangements was all the more surprising in light of the nine-year impasse in the General Assembly's peacekeeping committee over rules to govern peacekeeping operations. The committee had been established in 1965 after the Assembly recoiled from taking away the Soviet vote (Article 19 of the UN Charter) when Moscow refused, on political grounds, to pay its peacekeeping assessments for the Congo and UNEF I. The hope was that a US-USSR accommodation on ground rules would stimulate use of UN peacekeeping to contain local conflicts. Instead, the protracted exercise in the peacekeeping committee underlined differences and intensified controversy whenever a peacekeeping issue arose in the Security Council. The US-led

group wanted to codify the Hammarskjold doctrine of wide latitude for the Secretary General in recruiting a force, naming the commander and managing an operation once it had been launched; the Soviets (with French support) were suspicious of undue American influence in the Secretariat and insisted that key operational decisions remain with the Security Council even after launch. [1]

Despite these negative auguries, a consensus was quickly reached in the Security Council to send a military presence to the Middle East not only to monitor the truce, but to interpose during the disengagement process. In time, the UN took on unprecedented tasks of policing buffers and inspecting arms zones. American officials, including those not reputed to be UN devotees, consider the peacekeeping machinery "indispensable," with a potential for later stages of interim settlement. Moscow grumbled about cost but supported the renewal of the UNEF on the Egyptian front for the fourth time—albeit for a shorter term at Egyptian insistence—in April 1975 and the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan for a second term at the end of November 1974; what is more, it is paying its assessed share of the cost. China is withholding its payment but also its veto. The rest of the world has rarely shown such unanimity in backing a UN peacekeeping effort.

Part of the reason for quick action in the Council was that Washington saw in a UN force of middle powers a timely riposte to the Soviet gambit for joint American-Soviet military intervention to stop the Israeli advance on the West Bank of the Suez Canal. Moreover, the nonaligned backed this solution as a way of averting a great-power confrontation and helping the Arabs. The main reason, however, was simply that there was no alternative. No other instrumentality was available to carry out the diplomatic understanding between the major powers on how to contain the conflict, nor was any other mechanism acceptable to the contending parties as sufficiently reliable and impartial. The meshing of bilateral diplomacy outside the UN with efforts inside proved to be the critical element in getting the peacekeeping effort underway.

Another part of the reason for turning to the UN was historical circumstance. UNTSO observers were already on the spot, and the truce supervisory corps was reactivated and strengthened (to 300 officers) to define and police the cease-fire lines. UNEF II got underway expeditiously by drawing on the UN force in Cyprus. Within 48 hours of authorization, a cadre of nearly 600 Finnish, Irish, Austrian and Swedish troops was flown from Nicosia to the Suez Canal area to interpose between Egyptian and Israeli forces and arrange the disengagement. Subsequently, in the disengagement agreement of 18 January 1974, the UNEF was assigned the task of supervising deployment of forces to the new lines and then manning the Sinai buffer zone and verifying compliance with ceilings on men and arms in the limited arms zones. UNEF units and UNTSO observers were recruited for

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the UNDOF to carry out roughly similar duties under the terms of the Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreement of 31 May 1974.

An assessment of how well the peacekeepers have done so far may be instructive in determining how durable and serviceable the force is likely to be and how it enters into the calculations of the concerned parties as the dates for renewing the mandates near. Besides, because it is a "hard case" that tests to the utmost the UN's capacity to deal with politically charged and operationally complex disputes, the Middle East experience says something important about the potential (and the limits) of UN peacekeeping in other conflicts and other places.

Prospects for re-enlisting the force in later stages depend on how the Arabs and Israelis read the balance sheet of UN effectiveness. Both strength and vulnerability flow from the close link between disengagement agreements and the peacekeeping mechanism: Strength comes from the adversaries' explicit acceptance of the UN's authority to police the security arrangements; vulnerability from the fact that the terms of the disengagement accords were left ambiguous in many aspects so as to close the bargain. Moreover, left unresolved is the overwhelming question: Do the disengagement agreements fall apart like a house of cards if the UNEF and UNDOF mandates are not renewed?

Imperfections in the peacekeeping machinery make for another set of constraints that so far have proved manageable but could, in time, impede effectiveness. If the peacekeeping mission is to continue to serve as a viable international mechanism for containing the conflict while negotiations proceed, remedial action is imperative. UN peacekeepers are fully aware of their dependence on the solidity of the structure built by outside diplomacy. The United Nations is constantly testing the edges of its authority, and, while it sings a reassuring tune, it realizes how vulnerable it is to changes in the world balance of political and military forces and to any breakdown in the negotiating process.

II

In many ways, experience with the UNEF and UNDOF has been remarkably like that of a dozen or so other UN peacekeeping missions in the Middle East, Cyprus, the Congo, Kashmir, Yemen and elsewhere. Familiar axioms of successful peacekeeping were reinforced: That it is essential to sustain the political consensus among the major powers and to link this to Security Council action; to nourish the cooperation and confidence of the parties, both in the formulation of the mandate and in the conduct of the operation; to keep the troop contributors satisfied; and to give the Secretary General wide executive latitude in running the operation while ensuring that he is constantly tuned in to the political sensitivities and ultimate political authority of the Security Council. Above all, the meshing of classical, bilateral diplomacy outside the UN with efforts inside the organization was shown to be crucial. To a greater degree here than in any precedent case, success inside the UN framework, both in lining up world political backing and in designing workable peacekeeping machinery, depends on outside diplomacy to maintain an equilibrium and understanding responsive to the political needs of the major powers and the parties to the dispute.

Unique to the current operation, and likely to have the most lasting im-

Laplander vehicles of the Swedish UN battalions cross the Suez Canal on an Egyptian bridge

pact on future peacekeeping, is the organic connection between the disengagement agreements negotiated by the parties (with the United States playing a strong intermediary role) and the UN's mandate. The peacekeeping forces are governed not only (and not so much) by Security Council decisions and the operating rules of the Secretary General. The UN must interpret and implement provisions in the accords dealing with separation of forces and observance of arms limits. Even policing methods are specified in considerable detail in the Syrian-Israeli documents. Thus, the UN force in this case not only supervised the disengagement *process*—it carried out similar functions in Yemen in 1963 and on the Indo-Pakistan border in 1965—but is charged with continuing tasks of controlling the buffer zones and inspecting the flanking limited arms and forces zones.

How this came about is worth reviewing because the structure of the peacekeeping machinery, and particularly the connection between the mandate and the disengagement accords, can have implications for the future.

The Moscow understanding on a cease-fire was embodied in Security Council Resolution 338 of 22 October 1973, directing the parties to hold their positions and start "immediately after the cease-fire" to implement Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967 in all its parts and negotiate a just and durable peace. UN observers were deployed out of UNTSO centers in the area, mostly from Cairo, to supervise the cease-fire. When the truce failed to hold, the UNTSO corps was increased (Resolution 340 of 25 October) and officers were dispatched, as unarmed point men, to define the cease-fire line so that the UNEF could take positions between the Egyptian

and advancing Israeli forces. One part of the peacekeeping structure, therefore, is an expanded UNTSO corps of about 300 officers.

The second and main component of the peacekeeping machinery is the UNEF, set up by Resolution 340 to police the cease-fire lines and interpose between the disengaging forces. Established for an initial period of six months, the force was to continue thereafter "provided the Security Council so decides" (Resolution 341 of 27 October 1973). Though its use on the Syrian front was not excluded, it was understood that the immediate need was to deploy the UNEF on the Egyptian front, given the complexity of the cease-fire line, the plight of the Egyptian Third Army and the expanding Israeli salient west of the canal. The initial cadre flown in from Cyprus was increased by new recruitment to over 7000 (since reduced to just over 4000). Lieutenant General Ensio Siilasvuo of Finland relinquished his command as Chief of Staff of the UNTSO and was named Commander of the UNEF.

The basic charter of the force remains the "terms of reference" drafted by the Secretary General (S/11052/Revision 1, 27 October 1973) and approved by the Security Council. But, since the end of disengagement and redeployment to new lines early in 1974, the terms of the disengagement accord of 18 January 1974 largely determine the UNEF's assignment and, in many respects, its operating procedures. The arrangement provides for a UN-manned and controlled zone of disengagement in the Sinai (about 6 to 9 kilometers wide) to separate Israeli and Egyptian forces, and for periodic UN inspection of flanking security zones in which forces and arms are limited to prescribed levels and types, as well as a wider zone to be free of missiles and missile launchers. The UNEF executes its tasks with "the cooperation of the military observers of UNTSO." While there is no set division of labor, in the main the observers carry out the periodic inspections of the limited arms and missile-free zones, and battalions of the force police the buffer, provide the show of military presence and run the logistics.

In the case of the UNDOF on the Golan—the third component—the UN's role is even more intimately linked to the American-mediated agreement of 31 May 1974. The Security Council authorized the UNDOF for an initial period of six months (Resolution 350 of 31 May 1974) specifically to implement the agreement and the associated accords annexed to the resolution. It was set up as an "observer force," a hybrid label suggested by the American intermediary to reconcile Israeli demands that the UN police the lines as an interpository force and Syrian resistance to any authority beyond observation and reporting. The agreement was signed at Geneva "under the aegis of the United Nations" and "with the participation of representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union."

UNEF terms of reference apply, but it is the disengagement accord and associated documents that really govern, laying out the scenario for phased disengagement, the size of the UNDOF (about 1250) and its functions. Security arrangements are similar to those on the Egyptian side except that the buffer zone is not under UN jurisdiction. The Syrians insisted on reclaiming sovereignty and restoring civilian administration in the "zone of separation." For the Israelis also, the return of civilian life was to

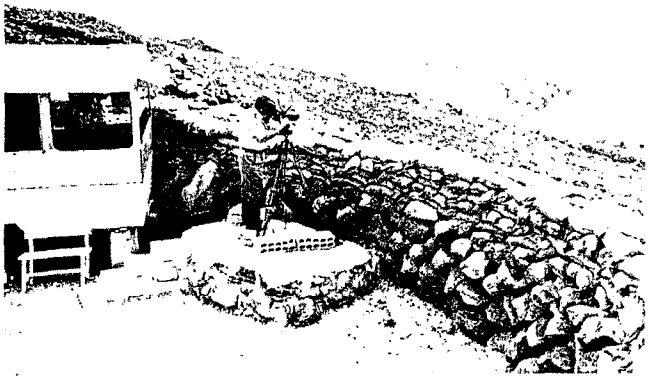
UNEF Commander Major General E. Siilasvuo of Finland with members of his staff

be a test of normalization and token of good faith. UN battalions are stationed in the area and patrol it. But their task is complicated because the threat of military intrusion is more immediate than in the Sinai and more difficult to discern and control. The accord also prescribed the permitted level of forces and arms (tanks and artillery of a certain caliber) in areas adjoining the zone of separation. In the Golan, certain types of heavy artillery are proscribed in a wider zone, and adjacent strips are to be free of missiles and missile launchers. Inspection procedures as well as the extent of freedom of movement, including patrol roads to be used, were specified in considerable detail.

What we have, then, is a complex security mechanism that imposes unprecedented and arduous policing responsibilities on the international force. How well has the UN performed? What are the vulnerabilities? Does experience warrant adapting the security arrangements to later stages of disengagement, or as a model in other local conflicts?

Having subscribed to the UN role as part of their disengagement plan—indeed, having insisted on UN policing as a condition of agreement—the parties have had reason to cooperate. In the Sinai, violation of the zone of disengagement has been minimal, presumed to be inadvertent, and intruders have been evicted without trouble. The buffer thus helps to build confidence in the solidity of the disengagement. On the Golan, the UN's assignment is more complicated in the zone of separation since its authority vis-à-vis the local administration is somewhat ambiguous. It must comply with applicable Syrian laws and "not hamper the functioning of local civil administration." Also, its ability to discern and deny access to the Syrian "military" has presented problems, as have minor and sporadic violations, but so far within tolerable limits.

The main value of the Sinai buffer, and to a lesser degree the Golan zone of separation, has been that it has reduced the risk of miscalculated encounter. Nadav Safran, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in October 1974, judges that at best the UN troops complicate the decision of a potential attacker by forcing him to choose between ordering them to step aside, and thus giving warning to the opponent, or driving through them and incurring the onus in the eyes of the world. The utility of the force should not be exaggerated, but may be greater than Safran suggests. Smarting from the bad name the first UNEF got in 1967 when it hastily withdrew, the doctrine



View from a UN observation post on the Golan Heights

at UNEF Headquarters and among the battalions is that the force would hold its ground and refuse to leave if asked. At the least, the matter would be referred to New York. Should the force stand fast, even though it may not actively resist, an attacker must contemplate the possibility of inflicting casualties. While there is no equivalence in the political price the Security Council would exact from Israel as against Syria or Egypt in the event of an attack through the buffer (and many Israeli officers disdain the deterrent effect of UN troops), Israel values the UN force as a concrete token of world interest in maintaining the truce. More important, any breach of the UN zone would inevitably prompt reaction by the great powers, including the United States.

UN officers and others on the spot differ on how effectively the UNEF actually controls the Sinai disengagement zone (several cynically volunteered to infiltrate a fully armed battalion into the zone undetected), but the net judgment is that it has imposed restraints and helped to build confidence. Its credibility depends to some extent on whether it is perceived as deploying a "sufficiency" of manpower with the determination and mobility to apprehend intruders. Given this condition, an expanded buffer zone as part of an agreement for a second-stage pullback would be manageable. Not surprisingly, a buffer is more workable in the desert than in populated areas where policing is more complicated. Further, a buffer under UN control, as in the Sinai, is more manageable than a demilitarized "zone of separation" under civilian administration, as in the Golan.

The adjacent limited arms and missile-free zones are useful complementary features in the security arrangements. UN officers and others on the spot will, in unguarded moments, admit that arms limits have not always been observed, that inspection procedures (whereby UN observers accompanied by liaison officers cover a set area on a set schedule) are far from foolproof, and that verification of the

missile-free zone is without much meaning since missiles can be readily wheeled in and launching pads easily prepared. But, so far, no serious violations have been charged. On balance, the system of limited arms zones adds to a sense of security by extending the area of separation and making it more complicated for antagonists to get at each other. It is at least a partial deterrent to imprudent conduct. More important, any significant buildup would sound the alarm and provide some warning against surprise attack. Should an expanded limited arms zone prove more negotiable than an expanded buffer, a measure of confidence could be added by having the inspections carried out by mixed patrols consisting of UN inspectors and liaison officers from both sides, as against the present system of liaison only from the side being inspected.

III

If the organic link between the disengagement accords and the UN mandate is the strength of the Middle East operation, it is also a source of weakness. Imprecise provisions written into the Syrian-Israeli accord as the price of agreement—and Secretary of State Kissinger's seeming acceptance of contrary interpretations—have proved troublesome. Differences of interpretation have sparked controversy over the UN's authority and what can be expected from the force. Its effectiveness has consequently been impaired. As noted, the zone of separation is under Syrian civilian administration but off-limits to the military. How to operate so as not to "hamper" the civilian administration poses difficulties. And who is to be considered "military"? The Israelis have even opposed the entry of Syrian military personnel to clear mines from the southern sector of the zone though this operation would take place under UN supervision. Interpretation of the prohibition against heavy artillery (defined in terms of range and gun caliber) in the limited arms zone has also been troublesome, the Israelis claiming that it implicitly forbids mortars of even greater caliber and range.

Moreover, the hybrid designation of the UNDOF has resulted in conflicting pressures on the UN—by Israel that it operate as a "force," using coercion if necessary to stop unauthorized entry, and by Syria that its tasks be limited to observation and reporting and that the UN avoid intrusive activities in the zone of separation. The public Syrian-Israeli protocol says the function of the force is to "use its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire"; and interpretation accepted by the parties but not made public authorizes the UNDOF to deny access to military forces in the separation zone. So far, the UN has successfully walked a tight line between the conflicting interpretations, relying mainly on UNTSO observers to man observation posts and carry out inspections and on the Austrian and Peruvian battalions to police the zone of separation and patrol access roads. Clearly, the lesson is that the "creative ambiguity" urged by peacekeeping experts and practitioners may be an asset in defining the terms of reference of a peacekeeping force, thus allowing it to adapt procedures to changing circumstance. But where the UN must interpret its role in a truce or disengagement agreement, imprecision becomes an impediment since the parties have differing and often contrary expectations of the UN's role. Given the delicate balance of the Syrian-Israeli military disengagement, trying to clarify ambiguities would tend to be destabilizing.

But, in any later stage, corrective interpretations, such as whether mortars are to be treated as artillery, should be a subject for negotiation.

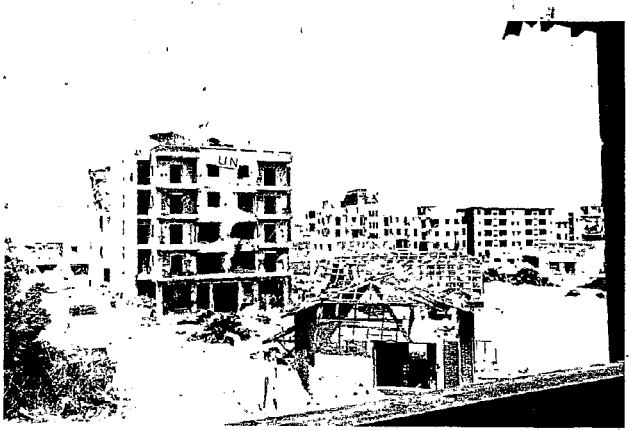
Ironically, Israel has been the advocate of an activist role, stronger authority and a longer term for the peacekeeping presence despite deep distrust of the UN because of political action against it in the deliberative bodies. This is natural in the circumstances, given Israel's great stake in maintaining the present lines as long as possible. Partly, however, Israel's position reflects concern that a decision by the other side not to renew the mandate of the UN force could be read as repudiation of the disengagement agreement and signal militant intentions. This concern goes beyond the effect of ambiguities involving the force's internal operations or the extent of the UN's authority to the fundamental issue of whether the political underpinnings of the peacekeeping mandate are eroding.

The most troublesome ambiguity—and political destabilizer—that flows from connecting the UN's mandate to the disengagement accords is this: Would failure to renew the mandate mean repudiation of the disengagement agreement and invalidate both the obligations assumed by the parties and the responsibilities of the UN? And, if the disengagement accord is no longer operative, will the parties no longer be restrained from building up military capacity on their side of the cease-fire line and adopting a posture of confrontation? For that matter, would the cease-fire still hold?

Though it has not surfaced in diplomatic or public discourse, such uncertainty is destabilizing and hardly conducive to a favorable negotiating climate. The political war of nerves rises to fever pitch as the deadline for renewal approaches.[2] Peace prospects are not advanced by alarmist speculation that failure to renew would create a "vacuum" in the area, implying both that the disengagement agreements would become invalid and that the UN would abdicate its responsibilities for policing the cease-fire lines.

Nowhere do the disengagement accords indicate that they are to be considered term agreements. The Syrian presumes the existence of the UNDOF to police its terms but does not say that if the policeman leaves his beat the disengagement contract is invalidated. The closest both the Egyptian and Syrian agreements come to putting an apparent limit on duration is in stating that the disengagement accord is not to be regarded as a "final peace agreement (the Syrian accord omits "final") and constitutes a "first step" (the Syrian omits "first") toward a "final, just and durable peace" (the Syrian omits "final") on the basis of Security Council Resolution 338 of 22 October 1973. No timetable or deadline is implied. Moreover, both agreements put first in the order of obligations assumed that the parties "will scrupulously observe the cease-fire . . . and will refrain from all military actions against each other" (the Egyptian agreement adds "paramilitary" action) from the time of the signing of the document. There is no hint that the cease-fire collapses if the mandate runs out.

Political wisdom suggests removing the uncertainty so that negotiation will not take place under artificial deadlines. Two points need to be clarified. One is that obligations assumed by the parties in the disengagement accords, insofar as they are not tied to specifics of the UN peacekeeping operation, remain binding whether or not the mandate is renewed. The other



A UN observation post in the city of Suez, destroyed during the October War

is that, while the UN military presence (UNEF and UNDOF) has to be periodically reactivated, the cease-fire remains in force, whether or not it can be effectively policed.

It cannot be convincingly argued that the UN's responsibility to supervise the cease-fire vanishes when the mandate of the peacekeeping force expires. The cease-fire was decreed by the Security Council on 22 October 1973 (Resolution 338) and reaffirmed the next day (Resolution 339) to apply to both fronts before the UNEF got its charter (Resolution 340 of 25 October) and long before the UNDOF was created. Should the Council fail to renew the mandates, the parties are, nonetheless, bound by the cease-fire, and the UN is obliged to use existing machinery to supervise observance.

IV

It is not generally realized that the UNTSO remains in being as a mechanism for supervising the cease-fire even if the UNEF and UNDOF are dismantled. This consideration is a strong argument for keeping the UNTSO independent and separate from the UNEF/UNDOF peacekeeping structure. On grounds of managerial efficiency, a superficial case can be made for integrating the three components. Why three separate commands and administrative establishments when operational tasks are so intertwined? Why put up with administrative overlapping and bureaucratic rivalry?

Actually, even from the managerial perspective, integration would not necessarily be productive. In practice, the UNEF's Chief Administrative Officer in Ismailia coordinates administration of the whole complex.[3] More important, General Siilasvuo (officially just the UNEF Commander) exercises "supervisory authority" over the UNDOF and is de facto chief of the entire peacekeeping mission. Contacts with the parties at the highest ministerial and military levels are pursued

by Siilasvuo, and his role in this regard has been sanctioned by the Secretary General.

An undercurrent of bureaucratic tension can be sensed between the UNEF and UNTSO: The UNEF resents what it considers an entrenched UNTSO establishment (disposing more observers than it can efficiently deploy), and the UNTSO is convinced that its elite and skilled officer corps carries out observation and inspection assignments for which the troops are unsuited. The difference reflects more than bureaucratic rivalry and goes to the heart of the UN's function. The UNEF sees interposition as the key and an armed force as the only credible manifestation that the UN will stand its ground. UNTSO officers argue that the main utility of peacekeeping is as a "presence," to observe and sound the alarm rather than to interpose or show muscle. Moreover, it is UNTSO doctrine that, if the UNEF and UNDOF were dismantled, the military observers could fill the breach. Some have developed an Ozymandias complex: [4] In due course, the sands will cover UNEF's traces, the UNDOF will disappear, and the UNTSO will inherit the UN's peacekeeping responsibilities in the area.

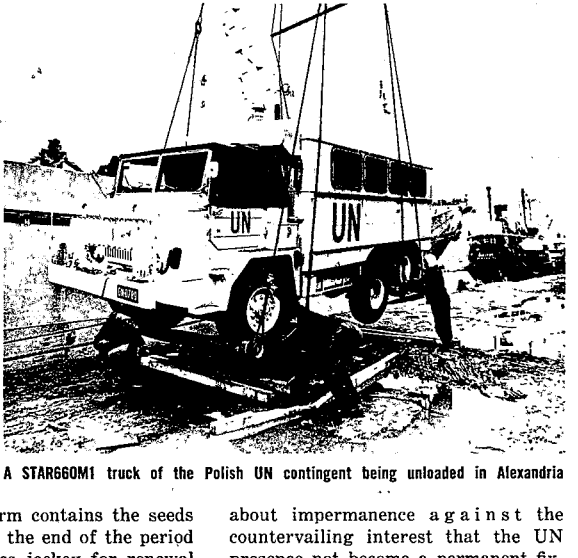
While much of this is bureaucratic fantasy, it contains a hard core of realism. The UNTSO can indeed be perceived as the continuing instrument of the UN's residual responsibility to supervise observance of the cease-fire. Its authority stems both from the 1948-49 mandate and from recent Security Council resolutions, explicitly recognized in Resolution 339 of 23 October 1973 which authorized enlargement of the corps to monitor the cease-fire. In the event of a breakdown of the disengagement arrangements or, more likely, a delay in renewing the force's mandate while diplomatic influence is brought to bear in the Security Council, there need not be a peacekeeping vacuum in the area. The UNTSO could be strengthened and called on to man the cease-fire line. Admittedly, this is no substitute for a peacekeeping force, and its departure would be unsettling. But the UNTSO provides an international presence to validate and monitor the cease-fire while diplomacy tries to restore the security arrangements that bolster the disengagement agreement.

V

Any decision to re-enlist a UN security backstop for later stages of disengagement and interim settlement will depend not only on a solid political consensus. Solutions will have to be found to certain persistent problems that could erode the effective functioning of the Middle East operation in the future. Many of these are vulnerabilities that afflict any peacekeeping mission but are troublesome to an uncommon degree in the politically sensitive Arab-Israeli conflict.

Short-Term Mandate. Paradoxically, the provision for a veto-proof term (six months), which was intended to quiet concern about premature withdrawal, has become a source of instability. A six-month mandate is probably the limit of what is politically acceptable to the Arab states and to key powers in the Security Council, notably the USSR and France. Even reliable troop contributors like Canada are reluctant to sign on for a long term though they can usually be counted on to re-enlist. [5] Besides, six months is a reasonable term for updating and accountability (though commanders in the field would feel more comfortable if they could plan for a longer stay, say one year). Yet

Trippendienst Photos



A STAR660M1 truck of the Polish UN contingent being unloaded in Alexandria

a short fixed term contains the seeds of contention as the end of the period nears and parties jockey for renewal or change in the mandate. Tension was further aggravated when the Security Council in April 1975 (with the United States reluctantly acquiescing) bowed to Egypt's insistence and extended the mandate for only three months. Israel's continuing concern has been repeatedly underlined. Jerusalem has declared that a substantial pullback in the Sinai in the next stage of disengagement must be contingent on a UN stay of several years.

Even an open-ended mandate, however, would not ensure durability. As happened in May 1967, if the underlying political consensus unravels so will the peacekeeping operation, no matter what the Security Council resolution provides. Troop contributors will pull out and members will withhold their payments. Basically, any acceptable formula must balance Israeli concern about impermanence against the countervailing interest that the UN presence not become a permanent fixture freezing an unacceptable situation. Making sure the force stays is likely to depend more on progress in negotiating a settlement and on sustaining confidence-building measures on the ground than on firmer legal provisions in the mandate.

Impartiality and a Credible Show of Force. To maintain credibility, the UN force must constantly nourish a reputation for competence, toughness and even-handedness in policing the buffer and the limited arms zones. Each side reads slackness in the UN's asserting authority on *its* side as a mirror image of what the other side is getting away with. When oil drums on demarcation lines are moved or ceilings on arms exceeded (even to a minor extent) and the UN fails to take corrective action, the side that reaps advantage can only assume the same is

happening on the other side, and credibility suffers.

The peacekeeping presence is symbolic and token since it is bound to lack coercive power to stop a determined attacker, particularly on the Arab-Israeli battleground where it would inevitably be outgunned. All the same, size and show of force are important—to demonstrate seriousness of purpose, pose a deterrent, raise the political cost to an attacker and expose him to the risk of inflicting casualties on UN troops. It makes a difference that the parties credit the UN with the will and capacity to "push out" intruders (as some commanders describe their function), handle minor infractions, observe and report on serious violations and pose uncertainty in the minds of military planners in Damascus, Cairo and Jerusalem about whether the force will hold its ground. If a "critical mass" is important, it must be concluded that any substantial cut in the size, arms and mobility of the force could erode confidence.

As UNEF's capacity to police large areas in the Sinai diminishes, because of units leaving and not being replaced, both its flexibility and its reputation for impartiality, authority and reliability could suffer. As of mid-January 1975, five line battalions (with only half of the manpower actually on line) were stretched out to cover the Sinai buffer zone that had been policed by nine battalions eight months earlier.[6] While protesting that the thinned-out force was adequate to the task, officers on the spot admit that, in the touchy Middle East situation, credibility depends on the adversaries perceiving the force to be adequate, determined to control the buffer, and meticulous and even-handed in carrying out inspections.

Doubts about whether manpower is adequate have been aggravated by lack of watchtowers and light tracked vehicles to facilitate observation and patrolling. On the Golan, the observation posts are on high ground, but the problem in the Sinai will become more acute if a second-stage pullback results in an expanded buffer. At the least, more attention needs to be paid to the trade-off between more men and more sophisticated equipment for observation and mobility. The use of light tracked vehicles (some units have been experimenting with adapting snowmobiles to sandmobiles but with indifferent success) and of watchtowers would reduce numbers needed for effective observation and inspection.[7]

Inducing Troops to Stay. As experience with UNEF I showed, nations will withdraw their troop contingents if the parties fall out. Instability is also implicit in the standard agreement between troop contributors and the UN which, in practice, allows national contingents to be pulled out at will. Whether for reasons of state,[8] or because nations become weary or change their political mind about participating, or because of dissatisfaction with the rate or promptness of reimbursement, when troop contributors pull up stakes the force structure and its mission are disrupted—with repercussions that weaken its reliability.

In general, there has been a tendency to minimize the drain on manpower and resources involved in organizing and sustaining UN contingents. Canada, for example, had to pull specialists out of diverse units of its armed forces to put together the support unit of 1100 men who share the logistical assignment with the Poles—and this at a time when its defense forces had been stripped down.

Lack of systematized procedures and preparedness (that is, field manuals on agreed scales for equipment), as well as cumbersome and wasteful UN administrative and requisition procedures, are additional disincentives.

Moreover, the longer an operation lasts, the less it can count on contributors keeping their men in the field. Arrangements with troop contributors need to be more attractive and more lasting. The problem has been partly taken care of by the General Assembly's decision in 1974 to reimburse troop-contributing countries at a level of $500 per man per month regardless of rank (with an additional $150 for technicians) though certain Western countries whose costs were above this scale were not totally satisfied. The result has been to aggravate the financial difficulties, as noted below. When contracting with troop contributors, the UN should at least insist on reasonable notice (say, 90 days) before troops are pulled out so that replacements can be found.

Financing. Inadequate and uncertain financing could impede the force in the future. For a time, it seemed that the financing scheme of everyone paying an equitable share would satisfy. The major powers—defined as the permanent members of the Security Council—and (in a lower bracket) the 23 other developed nations are taxed on a progressive scale, so that the United States pays about 29 percent as against its regular assessment of 25 percent, while the poor pay at lower than normal rates. But, in practice, the financing problem is far from solved. The Soviets object to rising costs, and less-developed nations want the rich to pay a still larger share. China, as well as Albania, Libya and Syria, refuse to pay because of political opposition to UN peacekeeping in general or this operation in particular. Some just withhold payment. Defaults and rising costs resulted in a deficit of $19.8 million the first year, and troop contributors were not paid fully or on time. Estimates for troop reimbursement (at the higher rates) and direct costs had to be revised sharply upward, from an annual rate of $60 million to $80 million. To meet current bills and make up the deficit, the United Nations will have to find close to $100 million this year which, in UN terms, is a lot of money. Thus, increased costs and pressure to economize may affect efficiency and compel the UN management to make do with a smaller force than the command judges necessary. It is not out of the question that political decisions—such as renewal of mandate of size of force —may be affected by the financial pinch.

Force Composition and Freedom of Movement. An unanticipated bonus of the Middle East operation is that the UNEF "terms of reference," drafted by the Secretary General and approved by the Security Council, pragmatically settled certain issues on the conduct of peacekeeping operations that had long been deadlocked in the UN's peacekeeping committee. In recent years, the delegations on that committee had been edging toward the idea that any code of "guidelines" would have to be couched in general terms and, adapted on a case-by-case basis. Now, the UNEF guidelines provide a practical model that is likely to become the general pattern for future operations.[9] The key issue has probably been settled once and for all: that the Secretary General will name the commander, recruit the force and write the operational rule book in consultation with and subject to approval of the Council, but exercise full manage-

ment in the field. However, he will act "under the authority of the Council" and refer to the Council decisions that "may affect the effective functioning of the force."

The compromise on force composition did not satisfy everyone and may be troublesome. The Secretary General selected contingents for the UNEF "in consultation with the Security Council and with the parties concerned" (the latter a standard proviso) but was enjoined to bear in mind "the accepted principle of equitable geographic distribution" to satisfy long-standing Communist and Third World insistence on greater participation by non-Western troops.[10] After much diplomatic bargaining, UNEF contingents were recruited from a wide geographic spectrum; NATO and Warsaw Pact countries are represented by Canadian and Polish logistical units.[11] Geographic balance has assured broad political support. In the process, efficiency, and particularly political acceptability to the parties, may have been devalued. While there need be no contradiction between effectiveness and broad geographic participation in a multinational force, for the intermediate term it will be difficult to ensure that the geographic principle does not impair efficiency. For the longer term, as countries gain experience in the field, wider participation can be had without sacrificing efficiency.

"Acceptability to the parties concerned" is another matter since peacekeepers rely on the confidence and cooperation of the parties. It is also related to freedom of movement. In this case, it was difficult to put together a balanced force acceptable to Israel since many Asians and Africans rushed to sever diplomatic relations following the October War, and only the Rumanians kept their ties with Israel (which was the reason Moscow refused to accept them as eligible to represent the Warsaw Pact nations). In the end, the compromise formula that was worked out left unsettled the need for flexibility in deployment of national battalions. Of the nine line and logistical contingents, four (Ghana, Indonesia, Poland and Senegal) do not recognize Israel and were estopped from operating on territory it controls. The same was true for some UNTSO observers, notably the Soviet. This, in turn, hampered the freedom of UN troops to move about in carrying out their duties. Force commanders rightly contend that, to function as an "integrated and efficient military unit" as the terms of reference require, they must be able to deploy units anywhere in the area of operation, even on territory controlled by the party that has not "accepted" the particular unit.

The Soviet delegation and many of the nonaligned in the Council insist that the UN force should not be restricted in its movements. But Israel has remained firm in refusing to accept on territory it controls troops from countries that do not recognize it. Polish logistical units were permitted to transit Israel from Sinai to Golan, but not to operate on the Israeli side. Indonesian, Ghanaian and Senegalese battalions must operate from Ismailia-Suez bases and cannot be transferred to the northern sector of the Sinai buffer since they would have to be based on the Israeli-held side. Two principles clash: that the force "must operate with the full cooperation of the parties concerned" and that the force, as noted, "must function as an integrated and efficient military unit." Israel is probably being subjected to a special rule. It is

unlikely that, in other cases, similar political pressure would be directed against a party to a conflict which finds certain units "unacceptable." [12] Meanwhile, it would be to Israel's interest to be more accommodating on freedom of deployment since it has everything to gain from effective and impartial exercise of the UN's authority in carrying out the security provisions of the disengagement agreements.

VI

Up to now, the UNEF and UNDOF have been effective in carrying out their mission under difficult conditions. But they are fragile and vulnerable to operational and political hazards. The requisites for survival are far from assured. Obviously, the fundamental condition for survival is that the understanding between the superpowers, reflecting parallel interests, be sustained. All the same, like other pieces of détente, this parallelism has limits: American and Soviet interests are in accord on the minimal conditions of maintaining the ceasefire, but diverge on the scenario for negotiation and on the outlines of a durable peace. Disturbance of the precarious political bargain between Moscow and Washington could upset the entire system.

But beyond this, the integrity and survival of the force depend on preserving the cooperation and confidence of the contending parties, as Secretary General Waldheim and the field commanders constantly stress. Even more than in other peacekeeping operations, trust in the UN's impartiality and reliability is crucial. Though many question UNEF's will and capacity to stand fast in the face of massive intrusion or attack, so far all sides have suspended their disbelief and adhere to the creative myth that the force will carry out its assignment. All sides must see their interest in cooperating. Otherwise, restraints weaken and short-term military advantage is sought in anticipation of another round.

"Peacekeeping," after all, is not "collective security" in the classical sense of a punitive or coersive mechanism against the aggressor even though the Soviets sometimes try to link the two. It is a military presence auxiliary to political action, designed to hold the line for peaceful adjustment by imposing restraints on the will to resume fighting. As John Holmes has pointed out, the UN "force" accomplishes its mission not by force at all but by the persuasion of its presence. [13] It always goes in with consent and can stay only so long as it retains the confidence and cooperation of the parties in dispute. This is true to an uncommon degree in the Middle East conflict.

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from the Middle East experience is that a peacekeeping mission, especially when linked to a disengagement plan, has a short half-life. It is most useful and acceptable in the early stages. Time wears down the consensus, erodes the enthusiasm of troop contributors, shifts the power balance. With time, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile the opposing interests of the side that wants the UN to provide stability and a calming atmosphere for negotiation and the side that fears UN peacekeepers will freeze the disengagement lines. Momentum on the diplomatic front is essential if confidence-sustaining measures on the ground are to work.

A final lesson may be in order. The peacekeeping mechanism that may serve to police a truce or an interim

disengagement plan does not warrant use as a model for a permanent or semipermanent force to guarantee a settlement. Troop composition becomes a more sensitive matter as does the inducement for troops to remain for a long term. Security measures in a settlement might need to involve troops of the parties themselves through, for example, mixed commissions or joint patrols. Credible commitments from major powers (especially the United States), either bilaterally or in a multilateral context, become part of the calculus. Above all, nothing in the history of conflict or peacekeeping refutes the long-held view in American officialdom regarding the fundamental requirement for effective outside guarantees: The principal guarantee of peace must come from a peace agreement, signed by both sides, which inspires confidence that it will be carried out because of mutual commitment to normalizing relations and intrinsic security arrangements that satisfy the long-term security needs of the antagonists. Outside guarantees can at best be additive and supportive of mutual obligations and supervisory measures written into a peace settlement. Regrettably, nothing on the horizon indicates that the Middle East parties or the major powers are ready for such a settlement, so it is premature to begin designing an international guarantee force.

NOTES

1 At the same time, the peacekeeping debate did help to clarify the political and operational boundaries for UN action.

2 Tension mounted even higher when Egypt announced that it would consent to renewal of the mandate after 24 April 1975 for three months rather than the usual six.

3 Integration has not been trouble-free. UNDOF's peculiar administrative and logistical problems—affecting in particular the special needs of the Canadian and Polish logistical contingents—have not always been adequately satisfied out of Ismailia.

4 See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias of Egypt*.

5 Some Canadian officials are also concerned about the unsettling impact of a short-term mandate whose renewal is subject to shifting political attitudes of the parties and their Security Council supporters. Effectiveness of peacekeeping, they argue, requires balancing political considerations (consent and confidence of the disputants) against the needs of the force and troop contributors to be able to count on the mandate's durability.

6 Two UNEF battalions—the Austrian and Peruvian—were assigned to UNDOF at the beginning of June 1974 along with elements from the Canadian and Polish logistics contingents. The Nepalese contingent was repatriated without replacement during August and September, and the Panamanian at the end of the year.

7 The obvious solution, air inspection by helicopter and fixed-wing light aircraft, is excluded because of security sensitivity on the part of the adversaries: there is also apprehension that trigger-happy troops will not distinguish UN aircraft from that of the foe.

8 For example, the Irish withdrew their battalion in May 1974 to police troubles back home.

9 However, as of April 1975, the peacekeeping committee had been blocked from taking formal action to codify the UNEF rules as model guidelines for the future, mainly because of Soviet opposition.

10 Actually, in the past, Asian and African troops served in the Middle East and the Congo as did the Yugoslavs. But Soviet-bloc troops had been blackballed, and, in Cyprus, only Western troops were acceptable to Makarios.

11 The decision not to include forces from "permanent members" was taken on American insistence. Although Secretary of State Rogers at one time wavered on this point, and some still have visions of a joint force policing a Pax Sovietica-Americana, the dominant view in US officialdom has been that putting US and Soviet troops into the Middle East is a volatile mix and it is important to keep the Soviet troops out. As a compromise, which some US policymakers view as a troublesome precedent, 36 Soviet officers were added to the UNTSO corps of observers, and the number of US officers was raised from 8 to 36. Since the Israelis refuse to accept the Soviet officers on territory they control, their area of assignment has been limited—and, to even things out, so has the area of deployment of US officers.

12 Some contend that UNEF II has diluted the principle of "acceptability" once and for all and that, in the future, disputants will have less say in the composition of the force and the authority of the commander to deploy his troops once they have consented to receive a UN peacekeeping force on their territory. Reporting to the Security Council in April 1975, the Secretary General took an unusually tough line on restrictions to freedom of movement: UNEF contingents must serve on "an equal basis" and "no differentiation can be made regarding the UN status of various contingents." (S/11670, 12 April 1975.)

13 John W. Holmes, "The Political and Philosophical Aspects of U. N. Security Forces," *International Journal*, Summer 1964, pp 291-307.