

The Grey Zone: The United States and the Illusory Zone Between Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

Willie Curtis

Volume 18, numéro 1, spring 1998

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs18_01art02

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Curtis, W. (1998). The Grey Zone: The United States and the Illusory Zone Between Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 18(1), 27–48.

The Grey Zone: The United States and the Illusory Zone Between Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

by *Willie Curtis*

Willie Curtis is Associate Professor of Political Science at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

INTRODUCTION

The post-Containment period has not been characterized by the peace of a new world order as envisioned by many Americans; indeed, since the end of the Cold War the international landscape has been witness to a proliferation of conflicts that seem to defy traditional solutions that had offered some measure of stability during the Cold War decades. The new challenges in the 'new world' disorder suggested that the demise of the Cold War stability had produced a vacuum in strategic thinking, leading to a fundamental policy dilemma for the new Clinton administration in the wake of the US involvement in Somalia. This vacuum can be described best as an inability on the part of the new administration to advance a consistent strategy for adapting peacekeeping policies and methods to the changing nature of conflicts in the post-Containment international environment.

By 1993, it was becoming increasingly apparent to the new administration that the traditional criteria of peacekeeping would no longer suffice for coping with the conflicts dominating the contemporary international order. Moreover, one might make the argument that traditional peacekeeping methods had become an anachronism in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, this article will advance the thesis that a zone of illusion or uncertainty exists in the form of a gap between traditional peacekeeping and war fighting, and will question whether the administration's policies are clarifying the American role in the increasingly complex post-Cold War peacekeeping environment.

This article will examine: first, the nature of conflict and its implications for peacekeeping in the post-Containment era; second, the evolving Clinton administration's policy on the use of force and the national security strategy which call for the sequential or simultaneous conduct of numerous peacekeeping operations; and third, the major criticisms of the administration's policy. Finally, it will answer the question of whether these policies are clarifying the United States' role in peacekeeping operations in the illusory zone between traditional peacekeeping and war fighting.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICTS IN THE POST-CONTAINMENT ERA

The collapse of the stabilizing effects of the superpower competition that existed during the Cold War decades has created a security environment in which the very nature of conflicts poses new and major complications for national decision makers quite unlike those posed by inter-state conflicts of the past. The new conflicts in the post-Containment

period have compelled members of the international community to reassess their policies for ensuring some measure of order in an otherwise anarchic international system.

Whereas the major security concern of the superpowers and their allies during the Cold War was the fear of conventional conflicts between nation-states escalating into a superpower confrontation at the strategic level, Lynn E. Davis has described the dominant conflicts in the contemporary international system as:

. . . involv[ing] violence within states among ethnic and religious groups seeking autonomy and independence. For such conflicts, political solutions upon which to base a peaceful settlement are difficult even to define. The rival groups are often unwilling to stop fighting short of achieving their goals; thus, any outside intervention to bring peace carries high risks and low probability of success.¹

In addition, Davis points to another feature of the new conflicts; "rarely are they contained within existing state boundaries."² An even more interesting assessment of conflicts in the post-Containment era has been advanced by Lt. Col. Ralph Peters of the US Army. Colonel Peters argues that "[o]ne consequence of the diffusion of power at the end of the twentieth century has been the resurgence of the 'warrior' . . . this morally savage, unruly warrior, not the trained, disciplined soldier, will be the type of enemy most frequently encountered by Euro-American militaries."³ Moreover, he argues that "[i]n less-fortunate regions, the other man rejects the codes of the West even as he bitterly envies Western property and privilege,"⁴ and furthermore, "[i]n many places the collapse of the orderly structures permits the re-emergence of brutal individuals and collective forms of behavior that civilized men recently believed could be eradicated like smallpox."⁵

Robert D. Kaplan, depicting the changing nature of conflicts in his article, "The Coming Anarchy," writes that "[a]nybody who has had experience with Chetniks in Serbia, 'technicals' in Somalia, Tontons Macoutes in Haiti, or soldiers in Sierra Leone can tell you, in places where the Western Enlightenment has not penetrated and where there has always been mass poverty, people find liberation in violence."⁶ Kaplan concludes that, "a large number of people on this planet, to whom the comfort and stability of middle-class life is utterly unknown, find war and a barracks existence a step up rather than a step down."⁷

Citing Martin Van Creveld, a noted military historian at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Kaplan suggests that to understand the present conflicts and "to see the future, the first step is to look back to the past immediately prior to the birth of modernism -- the wars in medieval Europe which began during the Reformation and reached their culmination in the Thirty Years' War."⁸ Van Creveld described that past as follows: "in all these struggles political, social, economic, and religious motives were hopelessly entangled. Since this was an age when armies consisted of mercenaries . . . they robbed the countryside on their own behalf . . . Engulfed by war, civilians suffered terrible atrocities."⁹

Thus, Kaplan sees the environment and actions of hostile elements in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and the Balkan as conflicts between "*re-primitivized man*: warrior societies operating at a time of unprecedented resource scarcity and planetary overcrowding."¹⁰ This characterization of conflict in the post-Containment era suggests that United Nations peacekeepers will be conducting operations in an environment in which the hostile forces may no longer abide by the rules of warfare that have characterized conflict between modern armies in the current Westphalian international order. Indeed, one might argue that in many parts of the world a pre-Westphalian grey zone (or zone of illusion) exists, in which the rules of warfare and the humane treatment of civilians may not prevail.

This raises the question of whether the guiding principles which have governed the conduct of traditional peacekeeping operations since their inception are still appropriate to the situations the peacekeepers will confront. What then are the implications for peacekeeping operations in the grey zone between traditional peacekeeping and warfighting?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACEKEEPING IN THE POST-CONTAINMENT ERA

First, the basic characteristics of peacekeeping operations have been transformed. Second, the criteria for intervention and force structuring will have to be altered, and third, decisions regarding intervention in the grey zone are likely to emphasize national interests as a critical criteria for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In addressing the first implication, one must take a retrospective historical approach. The traditional or classical concept of peacekeeping operations since its inception more than 40 years ago was predicated on the criteria of an agreement to cease hostilities between the warring parties, intervention with lightly armed impartial forces (normally non-superpower military forces) under the command of the United Nations, with a mandate that emphasized the use of force in self-defence.

These basic criteria governed traditional peacekeeping operations (with the exception of United Nations Operations in the Congo) and were conducive to intervention in inter-state conflicts during the period of superpower politics. During this period the tasks of traditional peacekeeping forces were:

surveillance in the initial and final stages of conflicts, either to prevent escalation (the preventive role), to monitor a cease-fire or troop withdrawal or as an element of interposition to achieve a negotiated end to hostilities. PKFs have therefore acted as a police force in charge of maintaining order at a delicate moment in which the presence of an impartial outside force can guarantee the fulfillment of certain agreements.¹¹

Clearly, the majority of post-Containment era conflicts do not exhibit the characteristics of inter-state conflicts and the intervention in Somalia represented a departure from the classical approach to peacekeeping as defined above. Somalia was an example of peacekeeping in the grey or illusory zone and its failure should have cautioned policy makers that they had entered an uncertain environment in which both the United States and the United Nations were ill-prepared to venture. The failure of United Nations

peacekeeping forces in Somalia has been attributed to ". . . the lack of clear criteria of reaching political agreement between the rival parties, ignorance of the historical context and the social reality of the area of operations, confusion between 'peacekeeping' and peace-enforcement, poor preparation, total unsuitability or lack of neutrality on the part of some of the people taking part in the operations."¹²

Thus, one lesson policy makers should have learned from the failed intervention in Somalia is that "the very concept of peacekeeping has serious limitations,"¹³ for UN operations in the contemporary international environment. Moreover, using classical or traditional peacekeeping methods in the environment described by Davis, Peters and Kaplan is clearly unsuitable, given the complex nature of conflicts occurring in the grey zone between traditional peacekeeping and warfighting in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, after the Somalia intervention policy makers at the UN and in the Clinton administration were forced to reassess the role of peacekeeping as a means of collective response to the disorder in the international system. Thus, the question of criteria for intervention and force structuring became a matter of debate in both New York and Washington.

The second implication for peacekeeping as a result of the changing nature of conflict is that, after the public outcry following "a small but politically significant number of American military casualties, led in October 1993 to a major debate as to whether US forces should remain in Somalia,"¹⁴ both the United Nations and US policy makers began a reassessment of the criteria for intervention in areas of instability. The dilemma facing the United Nations in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda was one of adhering to traditional criteria for peacekeeping in a zone where peace is an illusion. In the grey zone, adhering to criteria of impartiality, consent of belligerents and the use of force in only self-defense actually may undermine the effectiveness of the peacekeepers in providing an environment in which diplomatic activities may take place. Indeed, the Carnegie Commission *Report on Preventing Deadly Conflict* concluded that: "[r]igid adherence to the concept of impartiality can circumvent active intervention by the international community in deadly conflicts. In several cases, preserving the principle of impartiality has limited the UN's options and frustrated many of the military and political figures who tried to settle dispute."¹⁵

The question of how a military planner structures a peacekeeping force for intervention in the grey zone if classical or traditional peacekeeping doctrines are the guiding principles is an important one, for the dilemma is that while "[m]ilitary intervention must be fair and just in order to maintain legitimacy . . . genocide, ethnic cleansing, and rape as weapons of war all call for prompt and severe action."¹⁶ This problem is stated quite candidly in the United Nations publication, *Year in Review 1996: United Nations Peace Missions*:

United Nations peace-keeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda and Somalia from 1991 to 1995 revealed the agonizing problems that peace-keepers face when their instructions for keeping peace and imposing peace become blurred; and when they expect to assume tasks for which they are not mandated, organized or equipped.¹⁷

The report describes the changing perceptions of peacekeepers. "The most rudimentary definition of United Nations peace-keepers is that they are personnel voluntarily supplied and equipped by member States, dispatched by the Security Council, and serving under the UN flag, to accomplish a range of tasks defined by the Council, based on the presumed desire of the parties to end a conflict."¹⁸ And yet by ". . . 1996, a 'generation gap' between traditional and post-cold war United Nations peacekeeping, had become obvious."¹⁹ Thus, the United Nations report conceded that "[t]he United Nations, its Member States and their military establishments have entered uncharted territory;"²⁰ territory which may be characterized as a grey zone or zone of illusion of uncertain peace, a highly unstable environment in which there is a high probability that actual warfighting can occur at any moment. Indeed, this uncertainty suggests that these situations are so fluid that a rapid shift from some semblance of peace to actual warfighting can occur with little warning.

We turn next to the third implication of the changing nature of conflict for peacekeeping; national interests as a critical criteria for participating in peacekeeping operations in the post-Containment era. Herbert Howe's analysis of the lessons of Liberia illustrates the importance of national interests in the decision to intervene in internal conflicts. He writes that "Western nations, especially since the recent intervention in Somalia, hesitate to help police conflicts which do not threaten their vital interests."²¹ This reluctance to intervene is examined in David Lake and Donald Rothchild's excellent analysis of the spread of the new forms of global conflicts. They provide policy makers with an analysis of the complex nature of one of the defining features of peacekeeping in the grey zone and suggest that "[a]s new intrastate emergencies arise, it can be anticipated that diplomats, analysts, and increasingly publics will raise doubts about the prudence of such undertaking "²²

It has become increasingly clear that "[w]hile the international community might benefit significantly from ending the conflict, it is in no country's interests to pay unilaterally the substantial costs of resolving the dispute by acting as the world's policemen."²³ Moreover, Lake and Rothchild suggest that these factors explain the lack of strong action by the United States in Bosnia and Somalia. "The United States was unwilling to bear any substantial cost in human lives to guarantee the peace in Somalia -- although some casualties are probably inevitable in all peacemaking operations."²⁴

The question for US policy makers and other members of the international community is whether the United Nations should continue to move away from its traditional peacekeeping role of the past and venture further into the grey zone, a region in which neither the United States nor the United Nations seem prepared to make a commitment. Increased commitment to operations in the grey zone would signal an acknowledgment that traditional peacekeeping methods have become an anachronism and that policy makers may have to accept the fact that "[i]t is [a] sad, but realistic, commentary that some wars may have to go through the experience of the killing fields for there to be collective exhaustion and a willingness to give up and truly find peace."²⁵

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S EVOLVING POLICY ON THE USE OF FORCE

The imperfections of this world will not soon be eliminated, so decisionmakers must be careful to employ their foreign policy tools responsibly. This is a moral imperative because while "there is *Raison d'Etat* On occasions it spills blood."²⁶ President Clinton came to office highly optimistic about the revived role of the United Nations in providing for international stability. Indeed, within the five-year period from 1988 to 1992 the UN Security Council (with US approval) had authorized more peacekeeping operations than it had throughout its previous history. The administration's enthusiasm for an enhanced role for the United Nations was evident in its early call for establishment of a standby rapid deployment force to prevent aggression.

However, the administration soon experienced a reality check, for American participation in the grey zone of peacekeeping in Somalia forced a reassessment of US policy regarding peacekeeping in the post-Cold War era. Some analysts suggested that the Clinton administration's policy was based on a reaction to lessons learned from the Persian Gulf War and the Somalia operation. The lesson of the Gulf War was to seek quick victory, based on the assumption that the American people will not support military intervention that are not terminated quickly. The lesson from the Somalia intervention is the assumption that the US cannot afford significant casualties when minimal national interests are at stake. This is a rather simplistic analysis of the factors affecting the Clinton administration's willingness to use US military forces in the grey zone; for that policy has been shaped by a set of principles on the use of force that can be traced back to the decades of the 1980s.

In a speech delivered on 28 November 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger advanced a doctrine designed to establish six criteria regarding the use of military force. The "Weinberger Doctrine" would prevent the incremental employment of US forces, and when force was to be applied it would be used massively, with the ultimate goal of winning. The six criteria for the use of military force were later included in Weinberger's *Annual Report to Congress* for fiscal year 1987:

1. The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interests or that of our allies.
2. If we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning. If we are unwilling to commit forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all.
3. If we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives. And we should know precisely how our forces can accomplish those clearly defined objectives. And we should have and send, the forces needed to do just that.

4. The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed - their size, composition and disposition - must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
5. Before the United States commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.
6. The commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.²⁷

The Weinberger Doctrine sought to provide a calculated use of American military force and advanced a more constrained concept regarding its use than that advocated by Secretary of State George P. Shultz. As Charles H. Marthinsen suggests, "[t]o some reporters and commentators, Secretary of State George P. Schultz sounded like a 'Secretary of War' and former Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger came across as a 'Secretary of Peace' in their public discussions about the circumstances in which the United States should use force in advancing or defending its overseas interests."²⁸ "Americans," Schultz said, "must never be timid . . . We will use our power and our diplomacy in the service of peace and our ideals."²⁹

For George Shultz, "[t]he great challenge facing the United States, and the major significance of his speech, was the use of American power within the limits to further the cause of freedom. Observing that public support cannot be guaranteed in advance, Schultz said the US intervention in Grenada showed that 'a president who had the courage to lead will win public support if he acts wisely and effectively'."³⁰ Thus, Secretary Schultz saw the Weinberger criteria for the use of force as constraining the administration's ability to employ its diplomatic assets effectively.

It is also clear that the Clinton policy on the use of force has been profoundly influenced by General Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and with modifications reflecting the US experiences in Somalia, the Powell criteria has essentially supplanted the Weinberger Doctrine. "Early in the Clinton Administration, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell refined the military force argument for caution. Though not as restrictive as Weinberger, Powell argued that military force should be employed only when it can be used decisively to accomplish clear military and political objectives, and with broad public support."³¹ Thus, it would appear that the Powell criteria would govern the US participation in post-Containment era peacekeeping operations. What are the implications of this for US forces engaged in peacekeeping in the grey zone? To answer this question an examination of the Clinton administration's policy on the use of force is necessary.

CONFRONTING THE GREY ZONE AND THE ILLUSION OF PEACE: THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY ON THE USE OF FORCE

The public articulation of the Clinton policy on the use of force can be found in two documents, the February 1995 *National Security Strategy Report to the President*, and the February 1996 *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. The latter lists three categories of national interests for consideration in deciding when to use force.

The document stated ". . . while it is unwise to specify in advance all the limitations we will place on our use of force, we must be clear as possible about when and how we will use it."³²

There are three basic categories of natural interests that can merit the use of our armed forces. The first involves American's vital interests, that is, interests that are of broad, overriding importance to survival, security and vitality of our national entity -- the defense of US territory, citizens, allies and our economic well-being. We will do whatever it takes to defend these interests, including -- when necessary -- the unilateral and decisive use of military force.

The second category includes cases in which important, but not vital, U.S. interests are threatened. That is, the interests at stake do not affect our national survival, but they do affect importantly our national well-being and the character of the world in which we live. In such cases, military forces should only be used if they advance U.S. interests, they are likely to be able to accomplish their objectives, the costs and risks of their employment are commensurate with the interests at stake and other means have been tried and have failed to achieve our objectives. Such use of force should also be selective and limited, reflecting the relative saliency of the interests we have at stake.

The third category involves primarily humanitarian interests. Here, our decisions focus on the resources we can bring to bear by using unique capabilities of our military rather than on combat power of military force. Generally, the military is not the best tool to address humanitarian concerns. But under certain conditions, the use of our armed forces may be appropriate; when a humanitarian catastrophe dwarfs the ability of civilian relief agencies to respond; when the need for relief is urgent and only the military has the ability to jump-start the longer-term response to the disaster; when the response requires resources unique to the military; and when the risk to American troops is minimal.³³

Clinton administration spokespersons have stated that the US responses "in the Persian Gulf through Desert Storm and, more recently, Vigilant Warrior, when Iraq threatened aggression against Kuwait in October 1994" were examples of protecting America's vital interests,³⁴ while the US response in "Haiti and Bosnia are the most recent examples of important interests,"³⁵ and "[t]he relief operation in Rwanda . . . [where] U.S. military forces performed unique and essential roles, stabilized the situation and then got out, turning the operation over to the international relief community represents the third category of humanitarian interests."³⁶ Clearly, the document suggests that the basic criteria established by the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine will continue to shape the Clinton administration's approach to the use of force. As Goldich and Daggett explain: Over time the Clinton Administration has redefined and honed its policy on the use of force. In formal policy statements, the Administration has said that a decision to use force requires a determination to commit sufficient forces to achieve clearly defined objectives; a plan to achieve those objectives decisively; a commitment to reassess and adjust the size, composition, and use of forces as necessary; and a reasonable assurance of public and congressional support -- conditions that echo much of General Powell's arguments.³⁷

And yet, the argument can be made that given the current proliferation of grey zone conflicts, the criteria advocated by General Powell have the potential to constrain unduly America's ability to confront these most prevalent forms of conflict. If, indeed, the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine on the use of force has been internalized by the Clinton administration, then it is essential to analyze the administration's national security strategy, which suggests that the US military may be called upon to engage in the sequential or simultaneous conduct of numerous peacekeeping operations.

MAJOR CRITICISMS OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY ON POST- CONTAINMENT PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

. . . early in this period, the United States became increasingly unwilling to use its military potential on behalf of international policy goals other than the protection of vital or directly-threatened U.S. interests. As a consequence, the world's only remaining superpower could also have been described in many ways as a self-deterred power.³⁸ The current national security strategy would suggest that the US military will in all probability continue to be called on to engage in the sequential or simultaneous conduct of numerous peacekeeping operations, while struggling to maintain a force structure that can cope with the two regional wars contemplated by the Bottom-Up Review (BUR). What, then are the criticisms of the administration's policy on peacekeeping in the post-Containment era? A number of analysts have argued that the demands made on the military during this period of downsizing and budget reductions have created a mismatch between means and demands. Some analysts question whether the military is capable of or properly sized to fight two Major Regional Conflicts (MRCs) and engage in peacekeeping and other operations other than war (OOTW) or small scale contingencies (SSC). Another concern is whether the military can engage in increased peace operations missions and maintain the training and equipment necessary to be ready to perform its core mission of warfighting?

The US General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted an extensive study of the impact of peace operations on the military's capabilities to respond to the demands of the BUR in 1995 and concluded that, "[p]eace operations have heavily stressed certain key military capabilities, of which there are few in the active component, particularly certain Army support forces such as quartermaster and transportation units . . . while having less impact on other capabilities such as armored combat divisions . . ."³⁹ The GAO Report cautioned that "U.S. military forces would encounter numerous challenges if they needed to be redeployed on short notice from one or more sizable peace operations to a MRC . . .";⁴⁰ furthermore, "[o]btaining sufficient airlift would be one of the primary challenges encountered in redeploying forces from one or more peace operations to a MRC."⁴¹ The Department of Defense took considerable exception to the GAO's conclusions and replied that "[w]hile U.S. forces are participating in multilateral peace operations more frequently than they did during the Cold War, they continue to maintain the capability to deploy, fight, and achieve decisive victory against any potential adversary -- even in the unlikely event of two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts (MRC)."⁴²

Yet, no consensus has developed on this issue and the debate still continues, for as New York Times correspondent Eric Schmitt noted during the Rwanda crises, "the U.S. Army has sent five ships full of trucks, medical supplies and tents from Saipan, Thailand and Diego Garcia supplies earmarked to supply American troops in Korea if war erupted there to the crisis in central Africa."⁴³ Many of the military's concerns were reflected in General Shalikashvili's remarks in September 1994: "[m]y fear . . . is we're becoming mesmerized by operations other than war and we'll take our mind off what we're all about [which is] to fight and win our nation's wars."⁴⁴

Other critics suggest that the BUR did not reduce forces enough. David Isenberg, a senior research analyst with the Center for Defense Information argues that "the BUR established objectives for which its proposed forces are largely irrelevant such as peace enforcement and peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance . . ."⁴⁵ Isenberg is quite critical of the strategic assumptions underlying the BUR and states categorically that:

More serious, are the BUR's faulty strategic assumptions. There are several significant fallacies: the belief that two major regional wars requiring a U.S. military response are likely to occur simultaneously and the premise that a regional adversary would have capabilities (especially the emphasis on armor and artillery), similar to those supposedly possessed by Iraq during the gulf crisis; the assumption that if the United States maintains large enough forces, it can overwhelm such an enemy and produce a quick decisive victory with minimal casualties, as it did in Desert Storm; and the assumptions that not only will most regional crisis affect U.S. interests and require Washington's military response, but that other major powers would remain inert during a full-blown crisis, forcing the United States to wage war alone against a dangerous aggressor.⁴⁶ Clearly, there remains a debate about the extent that threats to international peace and stability should shape US force structure and whether defense budget cuts should continue. *The Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) was to provide a new assessment of defense strategy and policy. However, upon its release in May 1997 the QDR did not substantially change the two MRC requirement and suggested that "the demand for smaller-scale contingency operations is expected to remain high over the next 15 to 20 years. . . ."⁴⁷ The QDR also stated that ". . . these operations will still likely pose the most frequent challenge for U.S. forces through 2015 and may require significant commitments of forces, both active and Reserve."⁴⁸

Despite the QDR conclusions, the core question remains: will participation in numerous peacekeeping missions have an adverse effect on the military's ability to fight and win the nation's wars? When considering US participation in grey zone peacekeeping operations, the three key issues are: the impact of increased operational tempo; the impact on training; and the durability of peacekeeping as a mission. In each of these areas a number of analysts have been quite critical of the administration's policy. Nina M. Serafino, an analyst in the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division of the Congressional Research Service, provided the following assessment of the issue.

The increased 'operational tempo' demanded by peacekeeping takes time from necessary maintenance, repairs, and combat training, and can shorten the useful life of equipment.

Some analysts fear that readiness is jeopardized by dramatically increased operational tempos or lengthy continuation of the current pace because of peacekeeping duties.⁴⁹ Some members of Congress and military analysts also were concerned that the effects of peacekeeping operations on training could contribute to a deterioration in readiness. In a March 1994 report on the Somalia operation, the GAO described military opinion as pointing to "mixed" training effects. The report cited Army concerns that peacekeeping operations hurt combat readiness because soldiers are deprived of opportunities to practice combat skills and require reorientation to recoup traditional combat skills after returning from peacekeeping duty.⁵⁰ Serafino explains that "[s]ome analysts question whether military forces in general and U.S. military forces in particular are, by character, doctrine, and training, suited to carry out peacekeeping operations,"⁵¹ while others question "whether peacekeeping is a desirable mission for U.S. forces?"⁵²

Regarding the first question, Serafino cites the reason as ". . . military forces cultivate the instincts and skills to be fighters, while the skills and instincts needed for peacekeeping are those inculcated by law enforcement training."⁵³ Another reason is that peacekeeping requires a different approach to the use of force than combat operations. ". . . U.S. troops are taught to apply 'decisive' force to defeat an enemy. Most peacekeeping tasks, however, require restraint, not an 'overwhelming' or 'decisive' use of force."⁵⁴

Another critic of the administration's peace operations policy is John Hillen, a defense policy analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former officer in the US Army. Hillen recently wrote in the journal *Orbis* that the downsizing of the military has led to "a disparity between stated U.S. security commitments and the forces fielded by the nation . . . [and] the resulting strain (on both personnel and material) the armed forces suffer as they attempt to compensate with an accelerated operational tempo."⁵⁵ Citing a 1996 GAO Report, *Military Readiness: A Clear Policy Is Needed to Guide Management of Frequently Deployed Units*, Hillen points to the report's finding that "[t]his demand coupled with reduction in force size, means that many soldiers are deploying at a rate 300-400 percent higher than during the Cold War."⁵⁶

Hillen also refers to two disturbing consequences of downsizing and increased operational tempos. He explains that:

with the decline in the number of its warships, the Navy has been forced to "gap" the assignment of aircraft carriers and other warships, meaning that other forces must forgo routine training, maintenance, and rest in order to cover the gap left by the absence of a carrier.⁵⁷

As evidence, Hillen described the situation when ". . . the USS Enterprise left the Adriatic in September 1996 to reinforce the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf during the confrontation with Saddam Hussein. The sudden absence of the Enterprise forced the land-based aircraft supporting the implementation force in Bosnia to make up for the hundreds of weekly sorties flown by the carrier-based aircraft."⁵⁸ Hillen stated categorically that "[t]hese requirements are literally wearing out men and material"⁵⁹ and that ". . . the strain on the armed forces is lowering morale and the quality of military life."⁶⁰

While the debate continues and it remains unclear if US troops are losing their combat skills when engaged in peacekeeping operations, there is another impact that has not been assessed; one of growing complacency of troops engaged in peace operations. Hillen cites a letter he received from a troop commander, serving at the time in Bosnia. The commander stated his concerns as follows:

"I have quickly realized why Mongols never conducted peacekeeping operations," the commander writes. "It is an unnatural act. Aggressiveness, ingenuity and initiative are quickly punished while apathy, timidity and bureaucracy are well rewarded. My best men have become disenchanted about the service . . . The conditions are so good down here that complacency is rampant. Every tent has four to six VCRs, central heat, a library, gym, full-service laundry, snow removal services, etc . . . While it is luxury to have these, we have gotten very soft as a result."⁶¹

While no definitive answer is forthcoming to the question of whether combat capabilities are being degraded due to increased engagement in peace operations, it is also clear that the Clinton administration's policy on the use of force remains a concern for many analysts. Other critics of the administration's policy have focused on the potential constraining effects of the influence of the Weinberger/Powell criteria on the administration's policy on the use of force. Professor James A. Nathan has been most critical of this. He argues that:

Since the mid-1980s, Clausewitz has been both embraced in discourse and abandoned in fact by U.S. policy makers. Ever since Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger announced his "doctrine," U.S. armed forces have labored under an expanding list of restrictions, foremost of which has been the conviction that force should meet a three part test.⁶²

Nathan argues that "policy makers have been constrained to assure military planners that force is a last resort . . . used in an overwhelming fashion," to achieve "clear and measurable objectives."⁶³ Nathan further argues that "[c]urrent policy theory reverses the Clausewitzian insistence on the supremacy of policy over any autonomous logic attendant to arms."⁶⁴ He cites statements of senior civilians working in the Pentagon to a newspaper correspondent that "The Joint Chiefs exercise an incredible veto . . . There is no interest on the civilian side of this building in challenging the Joint Staff . . ."⁶⁵

Professor Nathan concludes that ". . . military force is now precluded unless and until, as General Powell insisted, we can measure [how] the military objective has been achieved,"⁶⁶ and only then, with this clear "end state specified for the US military and the world to know, is a mission now 'acceptable' to the American military."⁶⁷ This, Nathan argues ". . . stands the Clausewitzian relationship between policy and strategy on its head,"⁶⁸ for as General Powell noted, "it's how political objectives must be carefully matched to military objectives and the military means and what is achievable."⁶⁹ For Nathan the potential effects of this new wisdom is that "[n]otions such as validating the power of the United Nations, ensuring that there is a price to pay for aggression, or punishing war crimes apparently would be abandoned if the Powell/Weinberger strictures prevail."⁷⁰

Is Professor Nathan correct in his assessment of the Clinton administration policy on the use of force? Does the criteria advocated by General Powell unduly constrain US ability to confront the most prevalent forms of instabilities, conflicts in the grey zone between traditional peacekeeping and warfighting? Moreover, does a national security strategy which calls for the sequential or simultaneous conduct of numerous peacekeeping operations enhance US national interests or place at risk the military's ability to accomplish its core mission -- to fight and win the nation's wars? The very fact that these questions were still being debated in 1997 suggests that the fundamental problem is one of whether the Clinton administration's policy on peacekeeping operations is clarifying the US position or confusing both Americans and others regarding peacekeeping in the grey zone.

PEACEKEEPING IN THE ZONE OF ILLUSION: THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY-CLARIFYING OR CONFUSING THE ISSUE

If recent history is any gauge, peacekeeping operations in some as-yet-to be determined corners of the world promise to become part of the natural order of business for the armed services. The dilemma confronting uniform leaders is whether they can continue to adapt their forces and doctrine to that new reality without jeopardizing their ability to fight and win wars.⁷¹

In the latter part of the twentieth century, "President Bush's 'New World Order' policy represented an attempt to apply US leadership and power to the requirements; for order in a world that would succeed the politically frozen Cold War international system."⁷² Upon taking office the Clinton administration faced a similar challenge, for the demise of the "New World Order" concept and the descent into the "New World Disorder" opened a debate on US participation in post-Containment conflicts that do not place at risk any "vital" US interests. Confronting an international environment of aggressions and sources of conflicts that to date have defied US policy makers' attempts to clearly identify has created a policy void that remains to be filled.

Indeed, it is doubtful if a coherent overall national strategy can be developed that will have the sustained effects of the Cold War Containment policy that created some semblance of peace for approximately 45 years in Europe. The administration's task is to articulate a policy that will bridge the gap between the 1990s and the first decades of the twenty-first century, that will in all probability continue to be beset by a wide range of localized wars, aggressions, and violations of human rights and humanitarian concerns that do not directly threaten US national interests.

A major challenge for the administration is to fashion and articulate a policy for US participation in the grey zone of contemporary peacekeeping operations. The administration has argued that Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), its "Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," has provided a framework in which potential UN peacekeeping operations can be more carefully scrutinized and crafted than previous operations.⁷³ However, it remains to be seen if PDD- 25 provides sufficient policy guidelines to cope with the complexity of peacekeeping operations in the grey zone and whether it clarifies or merely confuses ourselves and others.

The Clinton administration's revised policy on multilateral peace operations was released in May 1994, and reflected both the continued influence of the Weinberger/Powell Doctrines and the experiences of Somalia and Bosnia prior to the implementation of the Dayton Accords. As Stanley R. Sloan suggests, "[t]he Administration had gone from U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright's advocacy of a US policy of 'assertive multilateralism' in June 1993 to PDD-25's policy of 'stringent conditionality'."⁷⁴

PDD-25 addressed six major policy areas involving US participation in peacekeeping operations. The six major areas are: first, making disciplined and coherent choices about which peace operations to support; second, reducing US cost for UN peace operations; third, defining clearly US policy regarding the command and control of American military forces in UN peace operations; fourth, reforming and improving the UN's capability to manage peace operations; fifth, improving the way the US Government manages and funds peace operations; and finally, creating better forms of cooperation between the Executive and Congress and the American public on peace operations.⁷⁵ For purposes of this analysis, the first policy area, "making disciplined and coherent choices about which peace operations to support," will be examined. PDD-25 lists the factors that guide US decision makers in deciding to vote for peace operations in the UN Security Council, the factors to be considered before involvement of the US or US military personnel, and the factors for consideration when it is likely that US military personnel will be involved in combat.

Briefly, when deciding to vote for peace operations in the UN Security Council, the US officials will determine whether:

- UN involvement advances US interests;
- there is a threat to the peace;
- there are clear objectives and means to accomplish the missions;
- the consequences of inaction have been weighed and considered unacceptable;
- operations duration is tied to clear objectives and realistic criteria for ending the operations.

The criteria for US participation include:

- risks to American personnel are considered acceptable;
- personnel, funds and other resources are available;
- US participation is necessary for an operation's success;
- the role of US forces is tied to clear objectives and an endpoint for US participation can be identified;
- domestic and congressional support exists or can be marshaled; and
- command and control arrangements are acceptable.

If US involvement will involve combat, the criteria are even more restrictive:

- a determination to commit sufficient forces to achieve clearly defined objectives;
- a plan to achieve those objectives decisively;

- a commitment to reassess and adjust, as necessary the size, composition and disposition of US forces to achieve American objectives.

Professional military planners might argue that these are common sense criteria, yet, on closer examination they constrain the US response to crises in the grey zone that in all probability will continue to dominate the new international security order. Moreover, "[t]he policy enunciated in PDD-25 makes threats to vital US interests the trigger for US action or support in resolving complex humanitarian emergencies."⁷⁶ In the words of Stanley Sloan, ". . . taken collectively, however, against the backdrop of the experiences with use of force in the post-Cold War world, these factors appear so constraining as to be almost prohibitive of action. In effect, PDD-25 could be described as a very effective set of guidelines in a self-deterrence foreign policy regime."⁷⁷

No less effective than the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine, PDD-25 did influence the US response to Rwanda, the first test of the Clinton administration's new policy on peacekeeping operations. Indeed, when an estimated 500,000 people died and 1.5 million became refugees during the conflict, the administration applied the provisions of PDD-25. The hesitancy on the part of the administration to become involved is explained by Nina Serafino in her analysis of 'PDD-25 in Action.' "On 22 July 1994, President Clinton announced U.S. military support for humanitarian assistance for the Rwandan refugee crisis in Zaire. The administration was careful to note that this did not constitute a peacekeeping effort and defended past decisions about level of U.S. involvement."⁷⁸

"Rwanda did not meet the criteria required for direct military involvement under PDD-25 It simply came down to a strict national interest test the new tougher requirements of PDD-25 simply could not justify intervention."⁷⁹ As noted, "[w]hat PDD-25 has done is unmistakable. Support or participation will not be forthcoming from the United States if the peace operation does not advance vital U.S. interests."⁸⁰ Clearly, a number of analysts see the administration's actions as seeking to apply the criteria of PDD-25 to justify nonintervention in grey zone peacekeeping operations. In the Rwandan situation the administration was responding to two constraints, "reluctance to require the U.S. forces to carry out all U.N. requested tasks and a desire by the U.S. military to limit their activities so as not to be drawn into ethnic conflict."⁸¹

Strict application of the policy guidelines of PDD-25 will ensure that US forces will not participate in the majority of UN peacekeeping efforts and it is apparent if Rwanda is an example of administration policy that PDD-25 represents an effective means of justifying inaction in the major areas of instability today. Indeed, the current impact of PDD-25 on administration policy has to date validated Professor Nathan's argument that ". . . the wisdom stands the Clausewitzian relationship between policy and strategy on its head, . . . political objectives [now] must be carefully matched to military objectives and military means and what is achievable . . . notions such as validating the power of the United Nations, ensuring that there is a price to pay for aggression, or punishing war crimes apparently would be abandoned if the Powell/Weinberger strictures prevail."⁸²

When assessing the current administration's policy on peacekeeping in the grey zone, one might add PDD-25 to these strictures, for as Commander Ware concludes regarding US actions/inactions regarding the Rwanda situation: "PDD-25 can be viewed as a general 'use of force' checklist as it covers basic requirements to any military operation, whether it is a U.N. sponsored operation or unilateral action by the United States."⁸³ Indeed, one is left with the impression that the rhetoric of the Clinton administration does not match its actions for "[i]n spite of the dicta in policy statements that humanitarian suffering and human rights abuse are interests which the United States will defend, they simply [in the case of Rwanda] were not vital to the United States."⁸⁴

Given its current performance, the Clinton administration's policy on peacekeeping in the grey zone or zone of illusion between traditional peacekeeping and peace-enforcement has created a considerable amount of ambiguity; and ambiguity can lead to confusion and miscalculation on the part of mischief makers during times of crisis.

CONCLUSION: A MORE FORCEFUL APPROACH TO PEACEKEEPING IN THE ZONE OF ILLUSION

If the majority of conflicts and instabilities of the post-Containment era are likely to be intra-state conflicts by warlords, militia and other groups with total disregard for the basic principles of human rights and the laws of warfare in hostile urban environments and failed states, the US policy makers must provide sufficient policy guidance and doctrine that will ensure that the US military forces and other state leaders understand the role that the US will play in maintaining international stability. While PDD-25 clearly attempts to balance the political and military demands it has not been fully tested in the grey zone of illusion in which neither peace nor war prevail.

In coping with instabilities in the grey zone, the administration has sent confusing signals to the American people and other national leaders regarding US willingness to participate in grey zone peacekeeping operations. The administration's policy of relying more on international organizations and regional powers to share the burden of maintaining international peace and stability is laudable; however, unless the United States takes the lead few national leaders will be willing to place their citizens at risk in such situations. And yet, the reluctance on the part of the US military to engage in grey zone peacekeeping is understandable, given the context of the current international security environment and the reductions in forces and budgets.

Current national security strategy and PDD-25 do not provide a coherent policy for dealing with grey zone conflicts and instabilities in the international security order. Unless the administration is willing to forego US participation in these operations because they require difficult decisions that may not have full public or Congressional support, and to justify its inaction based on the criteria of PDD-25, the US will be rejecting its responsibilities as the remaining superpower with a stake in ensuring a stable international order.

Today, President Clinton finds himself in a position similar to that of Austrian Chancellor Prince Mettenrich, British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh, King of Prussia, Frederick

William III and Czar of Russia, Alexander I. As Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George write: "During the nineteenth century, the greatest challenge to statecraft was the task of devising a political system that would contain international violence and prevent war from threatening once more, as it had during the Napoleonic period . . ." ⁸⁵ This administration has the difficult task of assisting in shaping the international order that will take us into the twenty-first century. While the new conflicts and instabilities dominating the current international order may not directly threaten the vital interests of the United States, this author would argue that the US must take the lead in dealing with them or in effect 'write off' a large part of the world. Indeed, it will be necessary to take a more forceful approach to peacekeeping instead of clinging to the guidelines of traditional peacekeeping or Cold War criteria on the use of force. The creation and maintenance of a relative stable and peaceful international order should remain the goal of US policy. In this new international environment, where intra-state conflicts are fought by warlords, militia and even children warriors with little regard for the rights of civilians and the basic principles of the rule of law, and human rights, it might be prudent to consider practicing diplomacy as advocated by that great American Will Rogers who stated that, "Diplomacy is the art of saying 'nice doggie' until you can find a rock." ⁸⁶ For peacekeeping in the grey zone of illusion, this may be the necessary prescription for the future.

Endnotes

This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the 37th Annual International Studies Association Convention in Toronto, Canada, 18-21 March 1997. The article represents arguments advanced by the author and do not represent the views of the US Naval Academy. I am indebted to Lt. Colonel Ralph Peters and Professor James A. Nathan for their comments and advice. I would like to thank Lt. Colonel Ralph Peters for introducing me to the importance of examining the implications of the new "warrior" for peacekeeping and his helpful comment.

1. Lynne E. Davis, *Peacekeeping and Peacemaking After the Cold War* (RAND Summer Institute, 1993), pp. 1-2.
2. Ibid., p. 8.
3. Ralph Peters, "Winning Against Warriors," *Strategic Review*, XXIV (Summer 1996), p. 12.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, (February 1994), p. 72.
7. Ibid., p. 79.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 73.

10. Ibid.

11. Vicenc Fisas, *Blue Geopolitics: The United Nations Reform and the Future of the Blue Helmet* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), p. 70.

12. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

13. Andrew J. Goodpaster, *When Diplomacy Is Not Enough: Managing Multinational Military Interventions* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1996), pp.10-11.

14. Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time*, 3rd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 268.

15. Goodpaster, *When Diplomacy Is Not Enough*, p. 3.

16. Ibid.

17. United Nations Peace Missions, "Year in Review, 1996," (New York: Department of Public Information, 1996), p. 1.

18. Ibid, p. 3.

19. Ibid., p. 14.

20. Ibid., p. 14.

21. Herbert Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," *International Security*, 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/97), p. 145.

22. David Lake and Donald Rothchild, *Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement: The International Spread and Management of Global Conflict*, [gopher://gopher-igcc.ucsd.edu:70/...2020%20%/20%20Lake-Ethnic%20Conflict.Omlne.Internet](http://gopher-igcc.ucsd.edu:70/...2020%20%/20%20Lake-Ethnic%20Conflict.Omlne.Internet). 11 March 1997.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Janet E. Heininger, "Lessons From A Venture Into Peace-Building: The United Nations and Cambodia," *Towson State Journal of International Affairs*, XXXII, no. 1 (1996), p. 37.

26. John N. Petrie, *American Neutrality In The 20th Century: The Impossible Dream* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1995), p. 131.
27. David T. Twining, "The Weinberger Doctrine and the Use of Force in the Contemporary Era," in Alan Ned Sabrosky and Robert L. Sloane, eds., *The Recourse to War: An Appraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1988), pp. 11-13.
28. Charles H. Mathinsen, "The Historical Significance of the Weinberger Doctrine," in Sabrosky and Sloane, eds., *The Recourse to War*, p. 39.
29. Twining, "The Weinberger Doctrine and the Use of Force in the Contemporary Era," p. 19.
30. Ibid., p. 21.
31. Robert L. Goldich and Stephen Daggett, *Defense Policy: Threats, Force Structure, and Budget Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Report 96-729F, 1997), p. CRS-8.
32. Superintendent of Documents, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 18.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Goldich and Daggett, *Defense Policy*, p. CRS-8.
38. Stanley R. Sloan, *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War World: Away from Self Deterrence?* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Report No. 97-78F, 1997), p. CRS-1.
39. United States General Accounting Office, *Heavy Use of Key Capabilities May Affect Response to Regional Conflicts* (Washington, DC: GAO/NSLAD-95-51, 1995), p. 2.
40. Ibid., p. 4.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 59-60.

43. Harry G. Summers, Jr. *The New World Strategy: A Military Policy for America's Future* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 166.
44. Ibid.
45. David Isenberg "The Pentagon's Fraudulent Bottom-Up Review," *Policy Analysis*, no. 206 (April 1994).
46. Ibid.
47. William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 1997), p. 11.
48. Ibid.
49. Nina M. Serafino, *Peacekeeping: Issues of U.S. Military Involvement* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Issue Brief, 1B94040), p. CRS-9.
50. Ibid., p. 9-10.
51. Ibid., p. 10.
52. Ibid., p. 11.
53. Ibid., p.10.
54. Ibid., p. 11.
55. John Hillen, "Superpower Don't Do Windows," *Orbis*, 41, no. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 243-44.
56. Ibid., p. 244.
57. Hillen, "Superpower Don't Do Windows," p. 244.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Katherine McIntire Peters, "The Price of Peace," *Government Executive*, 29, no. 3 (March 1997), p. 23.
62. James A. Nathan, "The Rise and Decline of Coercive Statecraft," *Proceedings, US Naval Institute*, 121 (October, 1996), p. 61.

63. Ibid., p. 62.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Nathan, "The Rise and Decline of Coercive Statecraft," p. 62.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. James Kitfield, "Waging Peace," *National Journal*, (October 1996).
72. Stanley R. Sloan, *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War World: Away from Self-Deterrence* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS-97-78F, 1997), p. CRS-7.
73. Nina M. Serafino, *Peacekeeping and U.S. Foreign Policy: Implementing PDD-25* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, CRS Report IB4043, Updated 17 November 1995), p. CRS-4.
74. Sloan, *The Use of Force in the Post-Cold War World*, p. CRS-16.
75. Ibid.
76. Lieutenant Commander Glenn T. Ware, "The Emerging Norm of Humanitarian Intervention and Presidential Decision Directive 25," *Naval Law Review*, 44 (Newport, RI, 1997), p. 2.
77. Sloan, *The Use of Force in the Post-Cold War World*, p. CRS-17.
78. Serafino, *Peacekeeping and U.S. Foreign Policy: Implementing PDD-25*, p. CRS-9.
79. Ware, "The Emerging Norm of Humanitarian Intervention and Presidential Decision Directive 25," pp. 43-44.
80. Ibid, p. 33.
81. Serafino, *Peacekeeping and U.S. Foreign Policy: Implementing PDD-25*, p. CRS-9.
82. Nathan, "The Rise and Decline of Coercive Statecraft," p. 62.

83. Ware, "The Emerging Norm of Humanitarian Intervention and Presidential Decision Directive 25," p. 37.

84. Ibid., pp. 37-38.

85. Craig and George, *Force and Statecraft*, p. 25.

86. This statement was attributed to Will Rogers in Tom Clancy's book *Op Center: Acts of War* (New York: Berkley Books, 1997), p. 149.