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PEACEKEEPING: CHARACTER AND GOALS

Peacekeeping is usually considered to have emerged after World War II. It is understood as the monitoring of cease-fires and buffer zones because it is said to have as much in common with peaceful settlement of disputes and enforcement of UN decisions. Peacekeeping troops are usually structured around light infantry battalions, not bringing heavy armor (e.g. usually no tanks or missiles), and consist of up to a few thousand soldiers.

Classical peacekeeping missions are governed by five principles:

1. Consent of the parties to the dispute for the establishment of the mission.
2. Non-use of force except in self-defense.
3. Voluntary contribution of troop contingents from smaller, neutral countries or middle powers.
4. Impartiality.
5. Day-to-day control of the operation by the Secretary-General.

The principal operational military objectives of traditional peacekeeping centre on the creation and occupation of a buffer zone to separate the parties in conflict (Israel – Egypt, Cyprus, Lebanon). The peacekeepers usually monitor the voluntary withdrawal of the armies out of this buffer zone, then occupy and monitor it. The monitoring involves patrolling, passive monitoring by technical equipment (radar, etc), and sometimes the use of planes and Marines. In regard to these activities, they are much akin to observation missions.

But classical peacekeeping missions usually entail more than just watching military movements: they include also:

1. Investigating ceasefire violations and other incidents.
2. Stabilizing measures, such as brokering local commanders' agreements over demarcation of boundaries.
3. Defusing incidents by such means as brokering a ceasefire when firing has broken out.
4. Making possible communication between parties with no diplomatic relations.
5. Engaging in peace building activities (giving humanitarian support, providing emergency medical services, assisting displaced persons, isolated communities in maintaining their supplies of water and electricity, etc.).
6. In peacekeeping mission UN peacekeepers assist in the exchange of prisoners of war, help repair local infrastructure and clear minefields.

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