



# World Chronicle

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## “THE FUTURE OF UN PEACEKEEPING”

During the Cold War, UN peacekeeping was principally to contain conflicts that the big powers deemed “peripheral.” In more recent times it was successful in bringing a measure of stability to places like Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Cambodia. But it also faltered badly -- in countries like Somalia, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. What about UN peacekeeping today? Will the recent conflict in Iraq affect its operations? How will UN peacekeeping evolve in the future? In this edition of **World Chronicle**, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, answers questions about the role of the blue berets in light of the recent or current conflicts in Iraq, DR Congo, and Ethiopia-Eritrea.

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**ANNOUNCER:** From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

United Nations Peacekeeping. During the Cold War, it was used to contain conflicts that the big powers deemed peripheral. After the Cold War, it was at times -- in Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Cambodia -- successful in bringing peace and stability. At other times -- in Somalia, in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda -- it led to tragic results. But what about UN peacekeeping today? Will the recent conflict in Iraq affect its operations? How will UN peacekeeping evolve in the future? Our guest today is the man in charge of UN peacekeeping. He is Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. Joining me to talk to Mr. Guéhenno are Abderrahim Foukara of Al Jazeera, and Corinne Lesnes of Le Monde. Mr. Guéhenno, welcome to **World Chronicle**. Mr. Ambassador, you were an Ambassador at one time, let's repeat the question, what effect will what has happened in Iraq have on, if any, on the future of UN peacekeeping operations?

**GUÉHENNO:** The Security Council obviously was divided on Iraq; what strikes me in peacekeeping operations is how much it wants to be united. And recently I have been discussing for instance Democratic Republic of Congo and some other places, which are not enough in the news, and it is striking to see how the Council there can find some unanimity and unity of purpose. So I think peacekeeping is an opportunity for the international community to come together and I hope that's what is going to happen.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Do you think there is likely to be a trend from here on in more in favour of multinational peacekeeping operations rather than UN peacekeeping per se?

**GUÉHENNO:** I think it very much depends on the circumstances. When you have a very unsettled environment, as we had in Afghanistan, or as there is now obviously in Iraq, the notion of having blue helmets, of having peacekeepers, I think is not a very good idea. When you have a peace agreement in place, having peacekeepers obviously can be a very good answer. It depends on the circumstances.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Let's switch quickly to the Democratic Republic of Congo since you mentioned that situation which seems to get worse and worse by the day: Why does the UN seem to be unsuccessful in that situation? Is it simply a case of not having enough troops? Having them spread too widely? After all the country is about the size of Western Europe, I believe.

**GUÉHENNO:** The number of troops, of blue helmets in Congo is less than the number of troops that are deployed in Kabul...

**LITTLEJOHNS:** So that is the problem.

**GUÉHENNO:** It is part of the problem. I think in Congo we have achieved a lot actually. When you see where Congo was two years ago and where it is now -- with an agreement to have a government of national unity -- there has been progress. But there is a series of local conflicts and for such local conflicts again it is a question of peace enforcement rather than peacekeeping. And for that you need more than blue helmets. And that's why for the moment we are discussing the possibility for instance of a multinational force to deploy in a difficult place like Ituri.

**FOUKARA:** Talking of a multinational force in Iraq, in Africa for example peacekeeping has taken many different colors. You have the experience of ECOMOG, basically African forces enforcing the peace or keeping the peace. In Iraq would you say it is a good idea to have a force made up from forces from the region, from the Arab world, or even from the Muslim World? Do you think that would be a good idea?

**GUÉHENNO:** I think that is a question that you have to ask the Iraqis first. I would say that in all those post-conflict situations there are tradeoffs. Because sometimes a country doesn't want to have too many troops from the neighbours, because when there are relations of power of influence that can make a particular country nervous, sometimes it is reassuring to have countries that are part of the region. In UN peacekeeping we think that most of the time it is good to have a mix. In our African missions we have African troops mixed with troops from other parts of the world: in Sierra Leone, we have Nigerians, we have Ghanaians, we have troops from West Africa as well as troops from Pakistan, or Bangladesh which have come all the way to help peace in Africa, and I think that is, in a way, the greatness of peacekeeping -- that there are so few opportunities where countries from different continents join forces join efforts for a common purpose. There are not that many opportunities where you see that happening, nowadays.

**FOUKARA:** If I may just ask one more? Now if there were an Arab or Muslim force operating in Iraq under the aegis of the United Nations, do you think that there may be some benefit in it in the sense that it may appease people in the region given the fact that there is so much discontent about US involvement in Iraq at the moment?

**GUÉHENNO:** I think it is very important for the stability of Iraq that the region be part of the effort. I think it is clear that in all those post-conflict situations the political process in a particular country has to be supported, has to be helped by all the countries concerned around;

we see it in Afghanistan. It is very important that Pakistan, that Iran feel fully comfortable with the political process that is being led by President Karzai with the support of Mr. Brahimi.

**LESNES:** You are talking about those forces, peacekeeping forces mixed together, lots of countries mixed and it seems like a nice cultural melting pot. But actually, I think you said that out of 40,000 military staff you have, you just have 4,000 are from the European Union. And you even said that I think that you thought this might be a gap between the rich and poor countries. So do you think there is something the UN can do or did you receive actually some commitments from the European Union? Or is this gap just going to widen up now?

**GUÉHENNO:** I think we can begin to close the gap, I hope we can begin to close that gap. It is true that after the tragedies of Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, basically NATO countries had a lot of concerns with being involved in peacekeeping. Maybe they didn't draw the right lessons from those crises, but that is a different story. The fact is that the bulk of our peacekeepers now come from the developing world, and they do a pretty good job. I think politically it doesn't send the right signal if each continent does not share in the burden. I think it is quite admirable -- for instance in a place like Congo you have 1600 troops from Uruguay coming all the way from Latin America to help along their fellow human beings in Africa. I think Europe close to Africa should be more visible in Africa, not in a neo-colonial way but under the UN flag to support peace there. I think there are signs that we are moving in the right direction. The British people helped us for Sierra Leone, we hope that France will help for the Democratic Republic of Congo. We see that in Congo in a difficult place we have now a commitment from Sweden to help in some specialized capacity, so there are movements in the right direction, but I would agree with you: not enough.

**LESNES:** But don't you think you could see things also the other way around, that means France might be willing to go to Congo but not under the MONUC, not under the UN mission, but with their own multilateral, multinational force. So is it the good signal you are talking about?

**GUÉHENNO:** Because that is a peace enforcement emergency situation, and in that kind of circumstance I think that the most effective way is to have a coalition of the willing rather than a peacekeeping force. When you have peace enforcement, having peacekeepers doesn't give the kind of flexibility you need to make a rapid move and stabilize a deteriorating situation.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Mr. Guéhenno, do you foresee more UN peacekeeping operations in the future than there have been in the past? What is the future of UN peacekeeping?

**GUÉHENNO:** Peacekeeping has been pronounced dead many times and many times the international community has seen that actually it is a fundamental tool that needs to be used not in all circumstances but when the political conditions are right. After the end of the cold war there was probably an excessive confidence in what peacekeeping could achieve and inserting peacekeepers in Yugoslavia when there was no peace to keep, addressing a situation like Rwanda and pulling out troops when on the contrary one should have inserted troops, of course that could only lead to tragedies. I think now we have a more I would say reasonable more cautious view of what peacekeeping can and cannot achieve. If you have a peace to keep, if you have the right resources with the right mandate, then you can have a real success. We have had a real success in Timor, we have created a good police force in Bosnia; when you think of what Sierra Leone was in 2000 on the brink of total collapse, Sierra Leone has had peaceful elections and is now moving I hope towards stability, I mean it is still a country that needs international support. But there has been real progress there. If you get it right, in terms of resources and mandate then you have a useful tool, then its up to the Security Council not to use peacekeeping in the wrong circumstances but then to authorize the missions when there is a will for peace and when the international communities also have sufficient will to give the right support.

**FOUKARA:** What did actually go to this specific case of the Congo. I mean that raises all sorts of questions. We had Musseveni, the President of Uganda describing the UN peacekeepers there as dangerous tourists, as useless; I was just wondering if you have a response to that particular case?

**GUÉHENNO:** Well, I think the response is in the thousands of poor refugees who congregate next to the MONUC compound, I mean they don't see MONUC as tourists, they see MONUC as their only hope. The truth is that in the extreme circumstances of Ituri, at the moment there is a need for more than peacekeepers; so we go out of our way to help those people along when we distribute water/food rations, try to help the extremely bad humanitarian situation. At the same time we know that we have neither the resources nor the mandate, the power to really stabilize fully the situation; that requires more and that's why we are asking for more.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Mr. Guehenno, many of our viewers have never seen a UN peacekeeping operation. I'd like to help them visualize one by showing an extract from a documentary – on what has been called a “classic” peacekeeping mission, in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Here it is:

**NARRATION:** Ethiopia and Eritrea, neighbours in the Horn of Africa. Two nations take their first steps to peace -- after a 2-year war in which tens of thousands of people died, and hundreds of thousands were driven from their homes... At the invitation of the two countries, a United Nations peacekeeping mission -- UNMEE -- is established, headed by the veteran diplomat from Botswana, Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila. The Mission's first challenge is to open up land access routes between the two countries... across the front lines and the heavily mined battlefields.

UNMEE's force consists of four thousand two hundred peacekeepers and military observers – from more than forty different countries. They are complemented by UNMEE's civilian staff, whose responsibilities range from managing the Mission's political affairs, to administrative and technical support, to investigating alleged violations of human rights. The peacekeepers are deployed along the one thousand kilometer border area between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Their job is first to establish -- then monitor and observe – a buffer zone between the armies of the two countries. Once an agreement (in principle, at least) has been reached on the location of this buffer zone, the armies of the two countries begin to redeploy. The Ethiopian army to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone, or TSZ, and the Eritrean army to the north. In addition to ground patrols, the Mission uses aerial verification and reconnaissance flights. On the 'recce' flights, a UN military observer is present to monitor any troop movements on the ground and ask the pilot for additional fly-overs, if necessary.

The peacekeepers face an additional challenge to monitoring the Zone. They are also called upon to support the efforts of the local authorities and the humanitarian organizations in mine awareness, demining and the provision of basic services.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Perhaps not everyone realizes the kinds of things that UN peacekeepers have to do even in relatively stable situations as that in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Is there perhaps a problem where the expectations of UN peacekeepers are too high and the mandates are not adequate to situation?

**GUÉHENNO:** That's often the case, wherever we deploy that creates immense hope in a place that has been torn by conflict where people are very poor, have suffered, they see the UN flag as suddenly the beginning of a new era. And it often is. But a peacekeeping mission cannot achieve more than what its authorized to achieve and what it has the resources to

achieve, and we have seen in Congo when we have a limited mandate, we are supporting a political process, we have helped organize the UN monitor the withdrawal of foreign troops; we now hope that that political process is going to gain strength. Can we provide security for all the Congolese? Obviously not. Can we deliver all the services that they should have after years of war? We cannot do that. And that's the dilemma of peacekeepers very often because of course we could have a sort of a cold attitude and not deploy so as not to create expectations. I think when you see the lives that are saved, it is very much worth deploying, but there are some risks there, and if the momentum is not followed up by the international community, if there are spoilers who want to undermine the process, then we can find ourselves in a very tough spot.

**FOUKARA:** Actually the example that we saw there, the peacekeepers between Ethiopia and Eritrea is just one case among many cases around the world where basically peacekeepers land and they get bogged down in conflicts and they stay in that particular part of the world year after year without that conflict going away. The point is that the UN does not have the military muscle to solve conflicts and keep the peace. Would you like to see a proper UN army rather than just a UN arm of peacekeepers?

**GUÉHENNO:** You mean a standing army?

**FOUKARA:** A standing army that can muscle its way in and deal with conflicts on the ground.

**GUÉHENNO:** Let me first address the question of Ethiopia/Eritrea. I think our force there plays a very useful role. When the two countries, after a bitter war, have had the courage to decide that their border would be defined and demarcated through a legal process, but during that process the two armies should not be confronting each other, and that's what the peacekeeping force is doing, it is creating a situation during which the process can take place. And I would say generally in peacekeeping very often that's our role: to create the condition for a political process than can be a demarcation of a border, that can be a political process leading to a transitional government of a variety of situations, but creating the conditions, not necessarily making it happen because that requires then the political will. Now your question on a standing force; this is one of my famous predecessors, Brian Urquhart has been asking for that. And indeed if the United Nations had a standing force it could go to the Council and say look we think that that needs to be deployed in this place or that place. I think frankly at the moment we have to be realistic. There wouldn't be any agreement in the Security Council in the membership for such a radical idea. What we are doing is tightening the arrangements that we have with member states so that when they say they would commit this particular capability to

the UN, they make the internal arrangements so that if they make then the political decision to commit it, there will not be any practical obstacle to a rapid deployment. We've also now created in the base we have in southern Italy, in Brindisi, a rapid deployment stock so that if we have the troops we can support them, we can launch the mission much more effectively than we would have been able to do a few years ago. So we are taking steps to be more effective short of having a standing army that I think the member states would not agree to.

**LESNES:** To come back to RDC to Congo: so it has been one week, you went to the Security Council and said that this is an emergency. It has been one week and so we reported stories with people over there saying what are they doing in New York? So it must sound very unfair to you and actually I guess you also would like to know what somebody like you has been doing all this week. I mean concretely what do you do? What are you trying to do? Contact all these countries? You are calling these countries? You are asking for troops?

**GUÉHENNO:** I have been on the phone with close to 20 countries actually discussing what their contribution could be and what timeframe, and whether they would consider it; also what kind of political pressure they can apply on key players so that the outside influences are positive and not negative. My job is to build consensus and create momentum. We have had meetings of the Security Council where I think there is a greater sense of the urgency of the matter, and I think there is a willingness to prove together what will be the eventual result. I cannot tell today. But I think that today the discussion is about putting troops on the ground; at the time of Rwanda the discussion was pulling troops out. So I think that's real progress. I think there are lessons that the international community is learning.

**LITTLEJOHNS:** Mr. Guéhenno, we have less than a minute left. The financial situation – there were reports that during the financial crisis of the U.N., that poorer countries were not being paid for troops they were providing for peacekeeping. Has that situation improved? Are they getting their cash now?

**GUÉHENNO:** That situation has considerably improved. I think now in most countries when there are still some shortfalls for some missions because the money is paid by the countries that have to pay the money mission by mission, so there are still some shortfalls in some old missions, but now most of the time the delays of payment are disappearing, which is a very important thing.



**LITTLEJOHNS:** Mr. Guéhenno, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**. Our guest has been Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. He was interviewed by Abderrahim Foukara of Al Jazeera, and Corinne Lesnes of Le Monde. I am Michael Littlejohns, thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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