
Testing the Waters, 1945–1955

Introduction: Experiments in an International Military

In the first half of the twentieth century, politicians, diplomats, and international civil servants within collective security and liberal internationalist circles sought to develop new legal norms to experiment in formative versions of peacekeeping. The establishment of an international military force became an increasingly popular prospect in the interwar period as the ‘Great Powers’ sought to use the League of Nations to stabilise disputed territories in a reconstituted Central Europe.¹ Once the Second World War concluded and burgeoning Cold War tensions increased, the idea of an international military emerged with enthusiasm as a solution to protracted conflicts. Concerned with the need to raise diplomatic favour to implement plans for an international military, many of these early debates centred on the recurring issue of how to reach a Great Power consensus on the design of an international force that could balance the restrictions of global sovereignty norms with the practicalities of confronting violence in the field.² This chapter traces these formative debates and draws a thread through the interwar period through to the Korean War, situating later UN peacekeeping missions as part of the longer historical legacies of early twentieth-century statecraft, interventionism, and liberal imperialism.

Beginning with an examination of the formative League of Nations multinational missions in interwar Europe, this chapter tracks the evolution of international plans and experiments in League and UN armament, illustrating parallels with the design and politics of the future armed peacekeeping project. From the multinational troops governed under League auspices in Central Europe to the UN military observers policing the Arab–Israeli War in 1948,

¹ The conclusion of the First World War made Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States the ‘Great Powers’ during the interwar period.

² *Revision of the United Nations Charter: Hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Revision of the United Nations Charter, Eighty-First Congress, Second Session, on Feb. 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 20, 1950* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 354; G. Murray, ‘Interview by James Sutterlin’, 10 January 1991, pp. 17–18.

these early experiments in the military sphere helped to – diplomatically and logistically – pave the way for the first armed UN mission in 1956. This chapter concludes with an examination of the deployment of a – limited – multinational military force to Korea in 1950, focusing on how the UN's direct involvement in the field affected the organisation's claims to impartiality in the UN headquarters. Of all these experiments, the war in Korea in particular facilitated the conflation of multilateral military interventions and the pursuit of global peace. However, the victory imperative in conflict contexts increasingly limited the diplomatic agility of the UN, obstructing mediation efforts. As legal commentator Josef Kunz has stressed about the UN's experience in Korea, 'it has shown that an international enforcement action is, for all practical purposes, a war and that the most important thing, as in any war, is to win it'.³

But how was it that ideas about arming a humanitarian international organisation evolved into legally and diplomatically acceptable – even popular – proposals for intervention within the post-war international community? The idea of a UN armed force had several different origins. First, it can be situated in the development and institutionalisation of the laws of war. Multilateral deployments, wrapped in UN branding, worked with the logic and permissions of international humanitarian law to reinvent militarism – and military power – as the most effective method of preventing violence, restoring law and order, and preserving world peace. In the late nineteenth century, global militaries were strengthened following the establishment of the ICRC and the development of laws of war which codified the expansion of 'belligerent privileges' and focused on limiting the excesses of war rather than implementing its abolition.⁴ This in turn encouraged longer-term or permanent conflicts, stagnating political crises and civilian displacement. For Sam Moyn, these international humanitarian legal 'reformers shifted their attention from opposing the crime of war to opposing war crimes', thus validating 'clean' wars – that is, wars whose conduct complied with international law – as the preferred pacifying tool for modern society.⁵ Existing limits on the laws of war were narrowed in the aftermath of the Second World War, entrenching norms like the Genocide Convention in 1948 and Geneva Conventions in 1949, and defining who was – or was not – deemed a legitimate target in conflict. Rather than a mechanism for global pacifism or a tool for liberationist movements, international humanitarian law became a line-drawing exercise that proved inadequate in responding to intra-state conflicts, such as civil wars or colonial (counter)insurgency. Indeed,

³ J. Kunz, 'Legality of the Security Council Resolutions of June 25 and 27, 1950', *The American Journal of International Law*, 45:1 (1951), p. 137.

⁴ P. Kalmanovitz, *The Laws of War in International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 1.

⁵ S. Moyn, *Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

‘Outlawing illegal conduct in wartime did as much to outline the silhouette of humanized war as to establish the legality of waging war itself.’⁶

Second, peacekeeping drew on ideas about the expansion of the conception of ‘collective security’ in the aftermath of the First World War within the League of Nations, as Patricia Clavin has articulated in relation to British involvement in the organisation.⁷ Similarly, Susan Pedersen’s book *The Guardians* highlighted the integral diplomatic and functional roles played by the League in transitioning global society from a world of empires to one of nation-states.⁸ During the interwar period, the League’s organisational staff and state membership debated many of the same territorial concerns and diplomatic topics that would later trouble the UN in the course of mid-century decolonisation. The League investigated implementing collective security, most promisingly with a (later abandoned) peacekeeping mission to Vilna, a city in Lithuania, in 1920–1921.⁹ Vilna had been part of the Russian Empire until it was occupied by the German army during the First World War. Although Lithuanian independence from Russian annexation had been established in 1918, the question of Vilna became a source of conflict between Lithuania and Poland once the Lithuanian government declared Vilna as their nation’s capital. While Polish troops occupied the region, the Polish government presented their own claim to Vilna to the League in 1920, hoping that the League Council would affirm the state’s authority over the region and end the conflict.¹⁰ The Council planned to construct a Military Commission, with 1,600 troops recruited from nations such as Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and Spain, which would be tasked with policing the provisional border between Poland and Lithuania.¹¹ However, after what Pierre Bourneuf has described as four months of *tergiversations diplomatiques* (or ‘diplomatic dithering’), the League cancelled its plans to send the Commission to the field in preference to the less dangerous option of mediation.¹² Although the Vilna mission was an example of the League’s weakness within the nation-state arena

⁶ B. van Dijk, *Preparing for War: The Making of the Geneva Conventions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). p. 5.

⁷ P. Clavin, ‘The Ben Pimlott Memorial Lecture 2019: Britain and the Making of Global Order after 1919’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 31:3 (2020), pp. 340–359.

⁸ S. Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 277.

⁹ P. Bourneuf, ‘La Société des Nations et la force internationale à Vilna (1920–1921): Un projet précurseur pour le maintien de la paix?’ *Relations Internationales*, 166:2 (2016), pp. 87–102.

¹⁰ C. Tessaris, ‘Open Diplomacy and Minority Rights: The League of Nations and Lithuania’s International Image in the Early 1920s’, in L. Clerc et al. (eds.), *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 40–41.

¹¹ A. James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), pp. 33–34.

¹² Bourneuf, ‘La Société des Nations et la force internationale à Vilna (1920–1921)’, p. 87.

of international politics, it also revealed the ambition of the organisation's staff to expand the League's functions into collective security. There had been many military alliances made between different countries previously, but this was the first instance of a force constructed from national battalions and united under an international organisation's auspices.

Subsequent efforts by the League to expand into military and political administration were more successful despite their lack of historiographical attention. Pursuant to the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, the League governed the Saar, a coal-rich, disputed region on the border between France and Germany, in the anticipation of a plebiscite, between 1920 and 1935. To reflect this aim, Norrie Macqueen has described this period of League operations as 'plebiscite peacekeeping'.¹³ League officials and Western commentators hoped that the vote would 'result in the removal of a danger spot from the political map' and thus demonstrate the value of the League to the international community.¹⁴ In 1934, the League established a multinational military force of 3,300 troops to send to the Saar, 'composed of British, Dutch, Italian, and Swedish contingents', echoing the planned operations for Vilna.¹⁵ This peacekeeping force was established to stabilise the region whilst the League Voting Commission carried out the plebiscite in January 1935 to determine the future sovereignty of the territory. Indeed, the mission was so popular with the local population that, although unification with Germany (and the Nazi Party) achieved 90 per cent of the vote, the option of status quo with the League received almost 9 per cent, beating the 0.4 per cent of voters who chose unification with France.¹⁶

The plebiscite result was not the impartial victory for democracy and collective security that League officials had promised. Accusations of Nazi coercion and intimidation in the Saar had been widespread since Hitler came to power in 1933.¹⁷ League Plebiscite Commissioners attempted to implement restrictive decrees to limit Nazi spying and influence on the media, but the League struggled to combat the pro-German propaganda campaign. The vote also threatened the security of those who opposed Germany and prompted an exodus of French-supporting refugees into France. Fears of a Nazi takeover in Austria and Switzerland also grew.¹⁸ The French Consulate in Saarbrücken,

¹³ N. Macqueen, 'Cold War Peacekeeping versus Humanitarian Intervention: Beyond the Hammarskjöldian Model', in F. Klose (ed.), *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 234–235.

¹⁴ H. Callender, 'In the Saar History Writes a Chapter', *The New York Times*, 13 January 1935.

¹⁵ Macqueen, 'Cold War Peacekeeping versus Humanitarian Intervention', p. 235.

¹⁶ Macqueen, 'Cold War Peacekeeping versus Humanitarian Intervention', p. 235.

¹⁷ James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics*, p. 76.

¹⁸ 'Austria Sends Force to Bar Nazi Rioting', *The New York Times*, 12 January 1935.

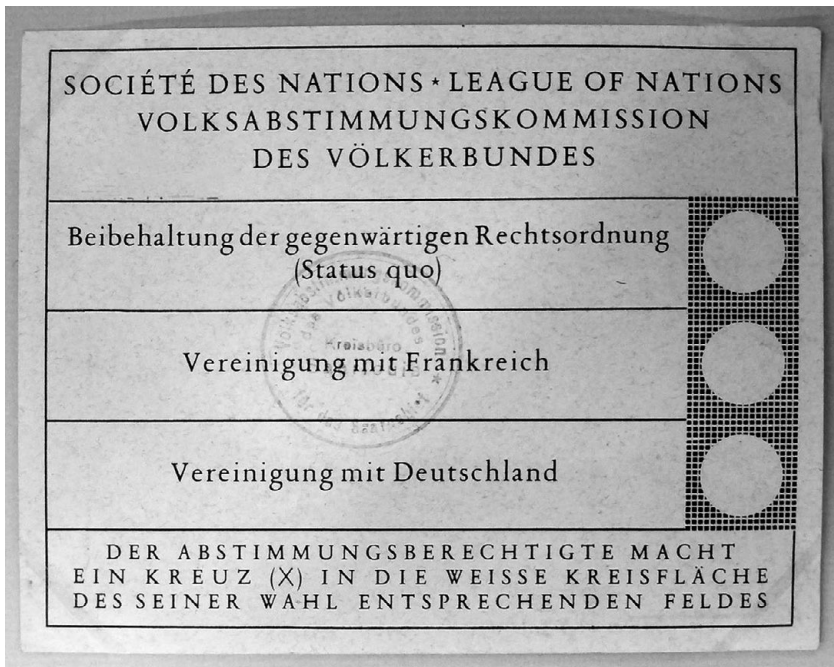


Figure 1.1 Ballot card for Saar plebiscite, January 1935.

Credit to Wikimedia.

the regional capital, issued several thousand emergency visas to facilitate the evacuation of the anti-Nazi refugees, and the French Red Cross prepared food aid for those who arrived in the concentration camps on French soil.¹⁹ Within a week, almost 10,000 refugees crossed the border into France from the Saar, and most were resettled in Palestine, France, or Paraguay by the Nansen International Office for Refugees.²⁰ Although the League administration and multinational force remained in the Saar for the transition period of six weeks, the future security of non-Nazis under the new regime felt uncertain enough to cause the evacuation of tens of thousands of people and provoke fears of Nazi expansion in neighbouring European nations.²¹

These formative peacekeeping proposals and operations provided blueprints for future political, legal, and technical preparations as UN leadership

¹⁹ 'Refugees Shot at from Saar Side', *The New York Times*, 17 January 1935.

²⁰ V. Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 51–56.

²¹ C. K. Streit, 'Saar and League Face Tense Period', *The New York Times*, 20 January 1935.

and external international representatives debated the design of a similar force under UN command. The choice to build upon the League Council's ambition and expand into the possibility of military deployment – as outlined in Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN Charter – demonstrated the centrality of reactive collective security in the new organisation's mandate. The failure of the League's policy of appeasement to curb the ethno-nationalist aggression of the Nazi state in the late 1930s provoked calls for an international military or policing force that could improve upon the League's sluggish reaction to interstate aggression. Foundational League experiments in collective security, such as the Vilna mission and the administration of the Saar, thus helped to pave the way for the UN's role in conflict response, inspiring a greater military role for the successor organisation and prompting diplomatic calls for a standby international force.

Building upon the reframing and policing of 'acceptable' interstate war in the 1940s, following the criminalisation and prosecution of Axis personnel for the crime of aggression,²² Western liberal internationalists conceived of an international military as the most viable, *peaceable* solution for intervening, managing, and resolving conflicts (especially against fascist states). By 1945, the nascent idea of an international peacekeeping force had been circulating for decades in European and North American liberal internationalist networks, especially those aligned with Wilsonian ideals of collective security, and had been further kindled by the successful establishment of the UN on 24 October 1945.²³ This emerging epistemic community in peacekeeping promoted the ideas of a UN-led transnational police, military, or air force, drawing on the foundational cosmopolitan ideals of the organisation.²⁴ The US State Department believed that these forces would distribute the burden of protecting international security across several contributing nations and would provide a guise of legitimacy to military actions in US interests.²⁵ During this transformative moment in international politics, the UN's first secretary-general Trygve Lie tangled himself in conversations about the use of force, an issue that had traditionally been the domain of nation-state militaries in quests for territorial, geopolitical, or economic domination. Keen to impress and prove the organisation's value in the shadow of the League, Lie sought to employ the UN's full powers, as mandated in the UN Charter, and embed the

²² F. Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 53.

²³ E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 35.

²⁴ The Soviets had insisted on the inclusion of an international air force because of a belief that this would be the 'best guarantee against German revanchism', J. Soffer, 'All for One or All for All: The UN Military Staff Committee and the Contradictions within American Internationalism', *Diplomatic History*, 21:1 (1997), p. 52.

²⁵ Soffer, 'All for One or All for All', p. 57.

organisation as the primary expert in global issues of international peace and security.

Academics, activist groups, and lawyers also began to discuss the legal, financial, and diplomatic ramifications of a military function within the UN bureaucracy. Many highlighted the benefits of an international force for maintaining world peace in the nuclear age, especially in the volatile context of decolonisation in the post-war period.²⁶ Increasingly, military measures were conceived as the most practical, humane, and immediate solution to thwart issues which threatened international peace and security. Trust in the UN to perform this central role in global governance led to popular support for a militarised international institution that could execute the functions suggested in the UN Charter and prevent a ‘Third World War’. This would push the international order beyond collective security and into a new era of UN-led conflict response. Not simply a multilateral arrangement between allied states, peacekeeping would accelerate the political credentials and position of the UN as a diplomatic *and* military power in its own right whilst also projecting its core identity as a rights-focused international organisation.

International Security Debates in a Nuclear Age

In the early twentieth century, Western internationalists and military figures called for aviation and atomic energy to be centralised under League and – later – UN power to prevent further state aggression.²⁷ Pleas for disarmament and mobilisation of the international community became particularly common in the aftermath of interstate violence, following the economic and emotional horrors of war.²⁸ Although the League failed in interwar general disarmament, due to Great Power suppression, the creation of the Disarmament Section established an important precedent for multilateral security that was strengthened in the post-Second World War period.²⁹ The technological advances of the two world wars had ignited fears across the globe of what future conflicts could look like and prompted questions about what role nuclear weapons would necessarily

²⁶ H. Kelsen, ‘Recent Trends in the Law of the United Nations’, *Social Research*, 18:2 (1951), pp. 135–151.

²⁷ W. H. Zaidi, *Technological Internationalism and World Order: Aviation, Atomic Energy, and the Search for International Peace, 1920–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

²⁸ J. Horne, ‘Demobilizing the Mind: France and the Legacy of the Great War, 1919–1939’, *French History and Civilization*, 2006 Seminar Papers (Published 2009), 2, pp. 1–19, available at <https://h-france.net/rude/vol2/horne2/>, accessed on 8 August 2021.

²⁹ H. A. Ikonoumou, ‘The Administrative Anatomy of Failure: The League of Nations Disarmament Section, 1919–1925’, *Contemporary European History*, 30 (2021), pp. 321–334.

play in any potential future aggression.³⁰ As Europe began to recover from the widescale violence and destruction of the Second World War, politicians, military officials, and activists returned to the topic of an international military as part of discussions on how to practically prevent the advent of another world war. The possibility of nuclear attack eliminated any reasonable provision for incremental or partial military engagement – or, indeed, surrender. These anxieties were gradually compounded by the freezing of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the late 1940s and an escalation of post-war competition between the two superpowers as the burgeoning Cold War developed.³¹ In this shifting geopolitical context, the UN became the preferred institution for those interested in establishing a more robust system of international recourse in the event of future aggression or nuclear warfare. By 1945, the possibility of empowering the international organisation, conceived as a ‘world government’, with military authority became less of a hypothetical debate and more of a practical discussion of legal permissions, financial resources, and military scope.

The conclusion of the Second World War and the repercussions of the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki encouraged many to express a shared desire for a UN-led international agency or world government that would manage all nuclear weapons and their potential deployment.³² The idea that nations should surrender their weapons to the organisation was not unpopular during the immediate post-war years. Indeed, some felt it was an integral aspect of the UN Charter. The World Federation of United Nations Associations met in September 1948 to criticise the lack of ‘implementation of Article 54 of the [UN] Charter which provides for the setting up of United Nations armed forces’ and recalled the previous year’s meeting’s efforts to establish a ‘system of international inspection and supervision sufficiently comprehensive to make possible the destruction of existing arms or their surrender to an international body’.³³ The US historian James T. Shotwell went as far as to publicly appeal for an international force that should ‘control all bombs and possible bombs in the world’ to obstruct warring powers and prevent the destruction of the earth.³⁴ This was also an idea promoted by the Federation of Atomic Scientists, a group of some of the Manhattan Project researchers, resulting in the creation of a popular book and a short documentary

³⁰ M. Krepton, *Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace: The Rise, Demise, and Revival of Arms Control* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

³¹ Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg*, p. 14.

³² R. A. Musto, ‘“Atoms for Police”: The United States and the Dream of a Nuclear-Armed United Nations, 1945–1962’, NPIHP Working Paper #15, October 2020.

³³ UN Archive (UNA, henceforth), S-0472-0098-04-00001, ‘World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) Resolutions on Article 43 of UN Charter (Plenary Assembly held in Rome, 5–10 September)’, September 1948, pp. 3–4.

³⁴ J. T. Shotwell, ‘Control of Atomic Energy’, *Survey Graphic* 34 (October 1945), p. 408.

film, *One World or None* in 1946.³⁵ For Petra Goedde, the *One World or None* book and documentary drove home the belief that the ‘only option available to humanity was to place the atomic bomb under the control of a world government body, preferably the United Nations’.³⁶

Although disengaged from the Manhattan Project Albert Einstein held similar beliefs about nuclear pacifism and disarmament. In 1946, he contributed a piece to the 1946 book, asserting his belief in the need for a ‘supranational’ institution or council that would ‘wage peace’ and control the world’s nuclear weapons.³⁷ After the nation-state competition of the Second World War and the nationalist ideology that had driven the crimes of the German state, Einstein saw world governance and international cooperation through the UN as fundamental to humanity and justice.³⁸ Einstein wrote for *The Atlantic* in 1947:

I believe that the United Nations should have the atomic bomb when it is supplied with its own armed forces and weapons. But it too should have the bomb for the sole purpose of deterring an aggressor or rebellious nations from making an atomic attack. It should not use the atomic bomb on its own initiative any more than the United States or any other power should do so.³⁹

As part of his plan, the UN would need to be empowered to control nuclear weapons and take an active role in protecting international peace and security; the organisation would behave with the same political *and* military power as a nation-state. For Einstein and his fellow Manhattan Project scientists who opposed the post-war US nuclear strategy,⁴⁰ the UN represented a singular opportunity to prevent global war and to harness nuclear power for its unifying qualities – a humbling realisation of humanity and individual insignificance and supposed power of deterrence rather than in weaponisation of its destructive capacity.⁴¹

³⁵ D. Masters and K. Way, *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1946).

³⁶ P. Goedde, *The Politics of Peace: A Global Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 72.

³⁷ A. Einstein, ‘Atomic War or Peace’, *The Atlantic*, November 1947.

³⁸ G. Mercer, ‘Albert Einstein, Power, the State, and Peace: The Physicist as Philosopher-King in a World State’, *International Social Science Review*, 69:3/4 (1994), p. 23.

³⁹ Einstein, ‘Atomic War or Peace’.

⁴⁰ For example, Robert Oppenheimer. However, other Manhattan Project scientists John von Neumann and Edward Teller were famously supportive of US nuclear policy. For more, see S. Carvin and M. J. Williams, *Law, Science, Liberalism and the American Way of Warfare: The Quest for Humanity in Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 89.

⁴¹ The peacemaking attributes of nuclear power and nuclear scientists are further explored in J. D. Hamblin, *The Wretched Atom: America’s Global Gamble with Peaceful Nuclear Technology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); R. van Munster and C. Sylvest,

Scientists and antinuclear activists were not alone in calling for the UN to take responsibility over the world's nuclear weapons. For Bernard Baruch, US financier and presidential advisor, the establishment of an international police force 'strong enough to halt aggression' would strengthen the UN and safeguard world peace in a nuclear era.⁴² Building on the internationalist ideas of the earlier Acheson-Lilienthal Report, Baruch promoted his idea of 'World Peace or World Destruction' – since termed the 'Baruch Plan' – as serving US delegate and temporary chairman to the UN Atomic Energy Commission in June 1946.⁴³ Although only the United States possessed nuclear weapons, fears of global destruction and the 'black portent of the new atomic age' loomed.⁴⁴ For the Truman Administration, the Baruch Plan presented a proposal that could pre-empt war by bolstering international institutions like the UN and codifying cooperation between the permanent member-states. For Baruch,

The peoples of these democracies gathered here have a particular concern with our answer, for their peoples hate war. They will have a heavy exaction to make of those who fail to provide an escape. They are not afraid of an internationalism that protects; they are unwilling to be fobbed off by mouthings about narrow sovereignty, which is today's phrase for yesterday's isolation.⁴⁵

In developing this internationalist proposal, the Truman Administration demonstrated their recognition that the United States' atomic monopoly would not last and that their 'head start' would not protect their country from aggressors.⁴⁶ The British and Canadian governments supported early draft proposals, and the Soviet Union agreed initially with the stipulation that the responsible UN specialised agency (the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission or UNAEC) would be subject to the Security Council veto. Baruch insisted that the authority of the UN and the UNAEC should be

Nuclear Realism: Global Political Thought during the Thermonuclear Revolution (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴² 'Baruch Urges Curb on Veto Powers in U.N. with World Force to Halt Aggression', *The New York Times*, 15 February 1950.

⁴³ For a more extensive examination of the Baruch Plan, see D. W. Kearn Jr, 'The Baruch Plan and the Quest for Atomic Disarmament', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 21:1 (2010), pp. 41–67; L. G. Gerber, 'The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 6:1 (1982), pp. 69–95; J. I. Lieberman, *The Scorpion and the Tarantula: The Struggle to Control Atomic Weapons, 1945–1949* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970); E. Roehrich, 'Negotiating Verification: International Diplomacy and the Evolution of Nuclear Safeguards, 1945–1972', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 29:1 (2018), pp. 29–50.

⁴⁴ B. Baruch, 'The Baruch Plan', presented to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, 14 June 1946, available at www.atomicarchive.com/resources/documents/deterrence/baruch-plan.html, accessed on 10 May 2021.

⁴⁵ Baruch, 'The Baruch Plan'.

⁴⁶ Kearn Jr, 'The Baruch Plan and the Quest for Atomic Disarmament', pp. 43–44.

protected, and that the organisation should be able to sanction violating member-states. However, the power of the Soviets' veto would immediately negate the authority of the organisation to sanction the member-state. This realisation prompted Baruch to call for the suspension – and, even, abolition – of the UN Security Council veto as part of his plan for global nuclear disarmament. For the Soviets, their attention to US 'atomic diplomacy' and preliminary approval of the Baruch Plan was part of a strategy to prevent diplomatic isolation in the post-war period; Stalin had no intention of slowing down his efforts to build an atomic bomb, nor to surrender the weapon to the UN.⁴⁷

However, within the international arena in 1946, Baruch and others' hopes for an international force were obstructed by diplomatic stagnation within the UN. Whilst political figures, such as Baruch, discussed the topic and lobbied the hypothetical of arming the organisation, the practical issue of making the permanent member-states agree on the political and logistical design of a UN military had fallen on the UN's Military Staff Committee representatives. The MSC held its first meeting on the design of a UN military in February 1946. Inspired by the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff command structure during the Second World War, the British proposed the construction of a UN Military Staff Committee (MSC). Its operations were later codified in Articles 46 and 47 of the UN Charter in 1945.⁴⁸ The MSC was conceived as an advisory group staffed by the Chiefs of Staff of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁴⁹ It was designed to assist on 'plans for the application of armed force' and was made 'responsible under the Security Council for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council'.⁵⁰

Initial MSC proposals considered a UN armed force that would be constructed from permanent member-states' national militaries. However, divergent ideas about how the UN would access the national contingents, the numbers required from each member-state, and concerns about how this would violate national sovereignty led to a stalemate. The US representatives submitted a paper to the MSC in 1946, describing their draft plan for a UN force:

[E]ach permanent member would maintain special UN units at operational strength and in combat readiness. These forces would remain under national control until the Security Council called them into UN

⁴⁷ Kearn Jr., 'The Baruch Plan and the Quest for Atomic Disarmament', p. 59.

⁴⁸ Soffer, 'All for One or All for All', p. 52.

⁴⁹ H. W. Baldwin, 'Armed Forces for UN Still a Remote Idea', *The New York Times*, 27 October 1946.

⁵⁰ UN Doc, UN Charter, 24 October 1945, available at www.un.org/en/sections/uncharter/index.html, accessed on 14 May 2018.

service. The Security Council would designate an overall commander to act under the strategic direction of the MSC.⁵¹

In contrast to the future UN peacekeeping project, the permanent members would be the majority – if not, sole – contributing nations included in the international UN force. It also placed the power of choosing a UN force commander with the Security Council rather than, as would be the custom in future missions, the secretary-general. This plan revealed the diplomatic optimism felt by the US government during this period as they sought to build upon the operational strength of the Allies rather than prioritise the obstruction of the Soviet Union's military strength. As Jonathan Soffer has argued, 'That a four-star American general still considered the possibility of joint manoeuvres with the Red Army indicates that as of May 1946 anti-Sovietism had not yet hardened into universal American dogma.'⁵²

Whilst MSC deliberations were ongoing in June 1946, Baruch delivered his speech to the international representatives at the UN Atomic Energy Commission. Publicising their position on the UN military, British and French representatives 'violently' opposed Baruch's plan to centre the UN in global denuclearising policy and blocked any further public discussions on the topic. They refused to dilute their sovereign powers or to sacrifice unilateral control of their own military forces, foreshadowing their joint veto during the Suez crisis in 1956.⁵³ For Britain and France, this erosion of sovereignty would threaten the integrity of their empires and disempower their own nations from military recourse. Their discussions in the MSC focused on how a UN force could enable legitimate interventions in *other* nations, rather than serve as a means to impede their own national foreign policy. This position resulted in the creation of only one agreement during the MSC's years of meaningful operation, 1945–1949: that once the UN force is established – and this was yet to be achieved – it would be 'limited to a police force capable of dealing with conflicts between small and medium nations, but not large enough to stop the aggression by any of the Great Powers. . .'⁵⁴ Although this policy would have given the UN more military power than the League, the ultimate failure of MSC negotiations meant that this restriction – one that would have prevented a UN intervention in the Suez crisis – was never tested practically.

Throughout the next two years of negotiations, mistrust solidified between the two superpowers. The Soviets consistently rejected the US representatives' 1946 plan, citing concerns about the potential use of the UN force to intervene

⁵¹ Soffer, 'All for One or All for All', p. 58.

⁵² Soffer, 'All for One or All for All', p. 60.

⁵³ 'Baruch Urges Curb on Veto Powers in U.N. with World Force to Halt Aggression', *The New York Times*, 15 February 1950.

⁵⁴ 'U.N. and Its Police Force', *The New York Times*, 21 April 1947.

in socialist regimes or to quash revolutions across the Global South. Soviet representatives also emphasised their issue with the United States seeking to measure contributions by comparable strength rather than units of equal size. This deadlock was not eased by enthusiasm for the international force from Western Europe or China. As Eric Grove has noted, ‘Given the difficulties that the French and the Chinese governments were facing internally, it was understandable that both were concerned that they should be allowed to withhold forces in cases of “National Emergency”’.⁵⁵ By January 1949, the MSC was unable to maintain the attention of the permanent members as alternative regional security arrangements were developed in alignment with new Cold War alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Ultimately, for similar ‘Realist reasons’ to the British and French, the United States and Soviet Union rejected the idea of weakening their sovereignty and legal protections of non-interventionism, anxious that the UN force could become a conduit for one power to militarily overwhelm the other.⁵⁶ Thus, in the post-war era, the permanent member-states forged a hierarchical internationalism within the UN, competing against alternative forms of globalism.⁵⁷ This enabled them to prioritise the protection of their own sovereignty whilst enjoying the diplomatic privileges of participating in – and, largely, controlling the whims of – the international community.

Unfazed by the position of the permanent members and the effective collapse of the MSC, Baruch rejuvenated his plan for world peace and supported a US Senate resolution that would promote the addition of a ‘supplementing’ article to the UN Charter in 1950: ‘Under the agreement, participating countries would contribute armed forces to an international peace-keeping force which could be ordered into action instantly by the Security Council.’⁵⁸ This resolution, termed the ‘Thomas-Douglas Resolution’ after the two sponsoring Senators,⁵⁹ was part of a trend of resolutions during the immediate post-war period that called for the revision of the UN Charter – in particular, the veto powers of the permanent five member-states and the prevention of war.⁶⁰ Seeing the UN as an important tool in tackling Soviet aggression, Baruch sought to communicate to fellow

⁵⁵ E. Grove, ‘UN Armed Forces and the Military Staff Committee: A Look Back’, *International Security*, 17:4 (1993), p. 179.

⁵⁶ C. Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 29.

⁵⁷ O. Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁵⁸ ‘Baruch Urges Curb on Veto Powers in U.N. with World Force to Halt Aggression’, 15 February 1950.

⁵⁹ United States Senate, ‘Senate Concurrent Resolution 52’.

⁶⁰ United States Senate, Report No. 2501, *Revision of the United Nations Charter* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1950).

Americans the value of the international organisation for protecting US interests. In North America, Baruch was aligned with a group of liberal American elites in his demands for the construction of a UN military or police force to safeguard international peace and security, with many calling for a simultaneous review of the abusive veto system.⁶¹ They believed that the strengthening of international human rights and collective security institutions – what Elizabeth Borgwardt described as a ‘new deal for the world’ – would concretise the United States’ national interests at the centre of international politics.⁶² Stephen Wertheim has similarly identified how many US politicians in the post-war period conceived of the UN as an instrument to give ‘the United States the new power to cast its rivals as enemies of the world – against whom all is permitted . . . American supremacy could not only be obstructive but also destructive, the more so if it paid false homage to international law and order’.⁶³ With this level of oversight over the organisation, Baruch and many others believed the United States did not need the veto to protect its interests within the UN.

Indeed, for many internationalists, the creation of the veto was in itself a technical mistake and an obstacle to the UN’s primary function to safeguard international peace and security. On 17 January 1946, at the first Security Council meeting based in London, one *New York Times* reporter commented on the fifty-one delegates’ attitude towards the veto, its role in the international politics of 1946, and its likely impermanence within the UN system:

They admit that the veto is a political necessity at the moment. They concede that it is better to restrict the veto to five than to give it to everybody, as in the League of Nations, and they agree that the great nations which furnish most of the men and material [sic] to fight the wars should have some special authority in the task of preventing wars. But they can concede all this and still feel that the veto greatly weakens the new organization. At any rate, they say, don’t ask us to be enthusiastic about it or believe we have found the ideal formula for keeping the peace.⁶⁴

Across the Atlantic, a group of American politicians were also hoping that the veto would be a short-term diplomatic solution whilst the UN grew from a fledgling institution to a powerful global government. One Senate hearing report submitted that ‘It is possible that in the early days of the United

⁶¹ ‘Liberals Urge End of the Veto in UN: Party Gives Stand on World Issues and Its U.S. Goals in National Platform’, *The New York Times*, 31 October 1949.

⁶² E. Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶³ S. Wertheim, *Tomorrow the World: The Birth of US Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), p. 172.

⁶⁴ J. B. Reston, ‘Fifty-One Nations in Search of Unity’, *The New York Times*, 27 January 1946.

Nations it was “oversold”. The [American] people wanted to believe that the United Nations would be able to back up its decisions by armed force.⁶⁵ Some US politicians, such as Senator Robert Taft, also felt that the veto had meant that ‘the United Nations had put the cart before the horse in its approach to the question of maintaining the peace’.⁶⁶ Fifty-six Soviet Union vetoes from 1946 to 1954 had triggered disappointment in the UN functions. These concerns prompted the first secretary-general Trygve Lie to write personally to all five permanent-member representatives in December 1949 to call for them to ‘broaden progressively their co-operation and to exercise restraint in the use of the veto in order to make the Security Council a more effective instrument for maintaining peace’.⁶⁷

Fearful of Soviet military superiority in Europe and Asia, the choice to put nuclear arms and equivalent weapons into the ownership of the UN became an increasingly mainstream opinion in Anglo-American diplomatic circles during the early Cold War. In 1955, Thomas K. Finletter, former secretary of the air force and US military official, declared his support for total nuclear disarmament enforced ‘by a peace-keeping international army’ as this would be the ‘only way to obtain world peace’ in a context where powerful nations were developing their own nuclear weapons.⁶⁸ He denounced ‘Soviet and Western plans for “unenforceable” disarmament as illusory and critically dangerous for the free nations if put into effect.’⁶⁹ He continued that ‘Only through it is there any hope that we can come through this hydrogen phase of civilization without destroying our country and most of the rest of the world with us.’⁷⁰

However, schisms within diplomatic, political, and scientific groups prevented meaningful action and the armament of the UN. As Goedde has argued, ‘Agreement on the environmental consequences of nuclear testing was much easier to come by than agreement on the nature and efficacy of nuclear deterrence.’⁷¹ Although ultimately unsuccessful, these post-war debates about disarming powerful nations of their nuclear weapons and transferring them into UN ownership help shed light on the evolution of the organisation out of a powerful effort in US politics to establish collective security. These discussions were heavily grounded in new anxieties about nuclear warfare and hopes to

⁶⁵ United States Senate, Document No. 87, *Review of the United Nations Charter: A Collection of Documents. Hearing before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session on Proposals to Amend or Otherwise Modify Existing International Peace and Security Organizations, Including the United Nations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 825.

⁶⁶ ‘Ban on the Veto Favored by Taft’, *The New York Times*, 16 September 1947.

⁶⁷ UNA, S-0472-0103-25-00001, ‘Letter from Trygve Lie, 6 December 1949’, pp. 20–24.

⁶⁸ ‘Finletter Urges Full Disarmament’, *The New York Times*, 28 June 1955.

⁶⁹ ‘Finletter Urges Full Disarmament’.

⁷⁰ ‘Finletter Urges Full Disarmament’.

⁷¹ Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, p. 82.

weaponise the UN to limit Soviet military assets. The repeated efforts of a vocal group of US politicians and elite commentators throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s provided a foundation for the UN peacekeeping project at a transformative moment for American international power thus preparing the organisation's expansion into the military sphere.

Observer Origins: Establishing a Presence in the Middle East

Whilst activists and politicians debated the future of nuclear power and its management by an international government, the UN became a key field-based actor in the post-war crisis in Palestine. Initially focused on developing a state-building strategy for Israel, the UN secretary-general, Trygve Lie, shifted from shaping the diplomatic debates around the partition's territorial borders and the resettlement of Jewish refugees on Palestinian land to implementing the deployment of a transnational unit of military observers to Palestine. These activities were closely related, however, as the UN's functional expansion into deploying military observers evolved from Lie's desire to ensure that the formation of the Israeli state – even if not in the design originally approved by Lie – would be a process supported and stabilised by the international organisation.

The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was tasked with developing a territorial solution to the 'Palestine Question' in May 1947. Within UN forums, the question prompted debates on the timeline for the withdrawal of the British Mandate in Palestine and the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of displaced Jewish refugees in the aftermath of the Holocaust and material damage of the Second World War.⁷² Arieh Kochavi has shown that the refugee crisis split Anglo-American allies in the post-war period with the British government initially afraid to harm its relations with neighbouring Arab states and Palestinians by accepting European Jews,⁷³ whilst the US vote on the Palestine Question was dependent on the resettlement of Jews in Palestine.⁷⁴ However, Zionist political pressure underpinned by decades of propaganda and galvanised by the tragedy of the Holocaust also

⁷² O. Yehudai, *Leaving Zion: Jewish Emigration from Palestine and Israel After World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷³ A British plan for partition in Palestine had been considered following the Peel Commission in 1937 but was abandoned later that year and subsequently supplanted by the 1939 White Paper which signalled the British government's intention to 'forego support of a Jewish state and to assert her authority over an undivided Palestine'. A. S. Klieman, 'The Resolution of Conflicts through Territorial Partition: The Palestine Experience', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22:2 (1980), p. 299. For more on British policy on Palestine, see: C. Beckerman, *Unexpected State: British Politics and the Creation of Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).

⁷⁴ A. J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

fundamentally shaped the process of Israeli state formation, complicating the humanitarian resettlement ‘narrative’ emphasised by representatives of UNSCOP in 1947.⁷⁵ Although the Palestine Question began as a resettlement issue for both British and US governments, it was soon sidelined by fierce debates over the splitting up of Palestinian territory and the cartographic logistics of nation-building.⁷⁶ Instead of conceiving – and prioritising – the resettlement of Jewish refugees as a political problem requiring attention, both British and US governments restricted the topic to a humanitarian context and focused on improving their own strategic interests in the region.⁷⁷

UNSCOP was a large multilateral committee composed of fifty-five representatives from eleven ‘neutral’ non-permanent UN member-states: Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia.⁷⁸ The committee visited Palestine and Lebanon in June and July 1947 and flew to Geneva to be given tours of displaced persons camps constructed in American and British occupation zones in Germany and Austria, interviewing Jewish refugees throughout August. Following committee deliberations in late August, the UNSCOP report was published to the General Assembly on 3 September 1947.⁷⁹ The committee recommended the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and suggested that Palestine be swiftly partitioned between Israel and Arab Palestinian territories: ‘In view of the special circumstances of the Palestine question, however, [the committee] has felt justified in proposing a measure which is designed to ameliorate promptly the condition of the Jewish segments of the displaced persons as a vital prerequisite to the settlement of the difficult conditions in Palestine.’⁸⁰ The UNSCOP report also designated the city of Jerusalem as a ‘*corpus separatum* under a special international regime’ to be ‘administered by the United Nations’ via the Trusteeship Council, dividing the governing territory between Palestinian and Israeli authorities,⁸¹ and operating through Arab and Jewish provisional Councils of Government.⁸²

⁷⁵ C. Nicault, ‘La Shoah et la création de l’État d’Israël : Où en est l’historiographie?’, *Les Cahiers de la Shoah*, 2002/1 (no. 6), pp. 161–204.

⁷⁶ C. Leuenberger and I. Schnell, *The Politics of Maps: Cartographic Constructions of Israel/Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁷⁷ S. Waldman, *Anglo-American Diplomacy and the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1948–1951* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 40–41.

⁷⁸ UN Doc, A/RES 106 (S-1), ‘106 (S-1) Special Committee on Palestine’, 15 May 1947.

⁷⁹ UN Doc, A/364, ‘Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 11: United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, Report to the General Assembly, Vol. 1’, 3 September 1947.

⁸⁰ UN Doc, A/364, ‘Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 11: United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, Report to the General Assembly, Vol. 1’, 3 September 1947.

⁸¹ UN Doc, A/RES/181 (II), ‘Resolution 181 (II). Future Government of Palestine’, 29 November 1947.

⁸² UN Doc, A/RES 106 (S-1), ‘106 (S-1) Special Committee on Palestine’, 15 May 1947.

Secretary-general Lie supported this partition plan and the UN's role in its implementation, and helped to lobby for its authorisation throughout October and November 1947, building upon his earlier discussions with British representatives in March and April.⁸³ Ellen Jenny Ravndal's analysis of Lie's personal papers has helped to reveal the special relationship that the secretary-general had to the birth of Israel – and the role that the UN would have as midwife in this process. In his memoirs, Lie entitled the chapter on the Arab–Israeli conflict as 'The First Major Test', referring to the crisis as a 'crucial test . . . to the wisdom and statesmanship' of the new organisation.⁸⁴ Ravndal has argued that 'Lie would later regard the State of Israel "as his child" and he took pride in the part he played in helping to establish the Jewish state. He stated in his memoirs that when the question was first brought to the UN, he did not have much knowledge of the region and its Arab inhabitants, but believed that the Jewish state would be a positive experience.'⁸⁵ In his mind, Lie's role as Norwegian foreign minister in exile during the Second World War further predisposed the secretary-general to solving the 'problem of hundreds of thousands of refugees languishing in European camps'.⁸⁶ That the partition policy would create another refugee crisis in Palestine did little to shake this foundational belief. Rather than an ardent Zionist, however, Lie was focused on how the 'Palestine Problem' could promote the UN as an expert in other post-colonial, territorial crises. In 1948, the conflict remained relatively disconnected from Cold War politics, suggesting that, in his words, Palestine was a case where the Great Powers 'should still be able to act in unison' and 'do something positive through the United Nations'.⁸⁷ His dismissal of the Arab Palestinian population was a by-product of his desire to demonstrate the institution's expertise in state-building and conflict response and his – confessed – ignorance on the politics of the region.

Although most of the Arab Palestinian population and neighbouring Arab nations rejected the UNSCOP plan, the resolution passed in the General Assembly with thirty-three to thirteen votes (and ten abstentions)⁸⁸ in favour of partition on 29 November 1947.⁸⁹ It was agreed that the British Mandate period would end and that the partition would enable the construction of an Israeli state on Palestinian territory. Several Arab countries formally proposed to request an International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory comment on the

⁸³ M. J. Haron, 'The British Decision to Give the Palestine Question to the United Nations', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17:2 (1981), pp. 241–248.

⁸⁴ E. J. Ravndal, "'The First Major Test': The UN Secretary-General and the Palestine Problem, 1947–9', *The International History Review*, 38:1 (2016), p. 197.

⁸⁵ Ravndal, "'The First Major Test'", p. 197.

⁸⁶ Ravndal, "'The First Major Test'", p. 197.

⁸⁷ Ravndal, "'The First Major Test'", p. 198.

⁸⁸ At this time, the UN General Assembly was comprised of fifty-six member-states.

⁸⁹ UN Doc, A/RES/181(II), 'Resolution 181 (II). Future Government of Palestine', 29 November 1947.

legal competency of the General Assembly to partition a state, hoping to challenge the partition plan.⁹⁰ Their proposal was narrowly rejected, and the UNSCOP plan was authorised as legal. As Victor Kattan has pointed out, ‘Had the Soviet Union or just one of its satellite states voted in favour . . . it would have been submitted to the ICJ for an advisory opinion.’⁹¹ In 1948, Pitman B. Potter, an American jurist, argued that it was likely that war would break out in Palestine if the UNSCOP plan was implemented as planned. He stated that ‘it would be politically very difficult if not impossible for the United Nations to dictate a solution in Palestine not acceptable to both Arabs and Jews, and practically impossible execute such a program in the absence of United Nations armed forces’.⁹² Although many politicians and populations were opposed to the UNSCOP partition plan, such as the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin, many commended the UNSCOP committee for developing a solution to a question that had lingered since the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

However, factional violence between Israeli forces and Arab militias escalated in the aftermath of the UNSCOP resolution vote in late November 1947. This conflict is known as the civil war in Mandatory Palestine, or the first phase of the 1947–1948 Palestine war, as Palestinians fought against their displacement. Scholars have maintained that it was only because Britain remained in effective control of Palestine during this period that neighbouring Arab states did not intervene during the winter of 1947.⁹³ Violence from Arab Palestinians remained largely improvised, limited to sticks and stones, and only escalated into militia-led aggression following the Israeli armed forces’ use of firearms. Alan Cunningham, British High Commissioner of Palestine, cabled London in December 1947 to emphasise, ‘The initial Arab outbreaks were spontaneous and unorganized and were more demonstrations of displeasure at the UN decision than determined attacks on Jews . . . although pleased at the strong response to the strike call [the Arab Higher Committee] were not in favour of serious outbreaks.’⁹⁴ The UNSCOP plan and resolution provoked violence between the two groups as it attempted to reframe Palestinian displacement as a ‘humanitarian’ solution to the Jewish refugee crisis in Europe.

⁹⁰ V. Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891–1949* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), p. 149.

⁹¹ Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest*, p. 151.

⁹² P. B. Potter, ‘The Palestine Problem before the United Nations’, *The American Journal of International Law*, 42:4 (1948), p. 860.

⁹³ Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest*, pp. 177–178.

⁹⁴ M. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* (London: Quartet Books, 1987), pp. 35–36.

However, in early 1948, violence between the two communities became more organised and threatened to engulf neighbouring Arab states, prompting US President Harry Truman to reconsider his country's position on the partition plan and suggest the construction of a UN Trusteeship over the entirety of Palestine – not just the city of Jerusalem.⁹⁵ Whilst American representatives lobbied for a Trusteeship in New York during March and April, Israeli militant groups Irgun and LEHI (meaning 'fighters for the freedom of Israel') perpetrated a series of massacres in areas assigned to Palestinians by the UNSCOP plan as well as in Jerusalem, most notably the Deir Yassin massacre, attempting to further expel or eradicate Palestinian Arabs from their homes.⁹⁶ Inspired by the UNSCOP plan, and undeterred by British Mandate soldiers, armed groups on both sides sought to protect and isolate their communities, implementing a de facto partition that would be mirrored in Cyprus in little more than a decade. One member of the Jewish Agency commented, 'It does not matter what Americans say; the Jews in Palestine have already put a sort of partition into force, and we are maintaining it.'⁹⁷ Inspired by the upcoming withdrawal of British troops, from March to May the Jewish leadership mobilised to implement a formal partition and demolition process that would remove any and all traces of Palestinians from designated Jewish areas, regardless of legal rights or cultural heritage.

During this unstable period, the Security Council established a UN Truce Commission, composed of consuls from Belgium, France, and the United States in Jerusalem in response to the United Nations Palestine Commission's (UNPC) inability to operate within the territory.⁹⁸ Building upon the consuls existing connections and diplomatic relationships within Jerusalem, it was hoped that the consuls of the Truce Commission would have more success at achieving a ceasefire than the UNPC, whose mandate was explicitly attached to the implementation of the UNSCOP partition plan – to which the Arab states were directly opposed. This tangle of UN commissions and representatives in Palestinian territory was only going to get more complicated once the British Mandate period concluded.

⁹⁵ 'United States Proposal for Temporary United Nations Trusteeship for Palestine: Statement by President Truman, March 25, 1948', available at <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/C3AFF48D711D26158525715400730A30>.

⁹⁶ M. Hogan, 'The 1948 Massacre at Deir Yassin Revisited', *The Historian*, 63:2 (2001), pp. 309–333; Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest*, p. 168.

⁹⁷ 'Plan to Drop Partition of Palestine', *The Times*, 20 March 1948.

⁹⁸ The other nation with a consul based in Jerusalem, Syria, 'indicated that his Government [was] not prepared to serve on the Commission'. UN Doc, S/727, 'Establishment of a United Nations Truce Commission for Palestine', 23 April 1948. The UNPC was officially relieved of its duties on 14 May 1948. UN Doc, A/553, 'Further Consideration of the Question of the Future Government of Palestine', 14 May 1948.

The withdrawal of British troops and the expiry of the British Mandate on 14 May 1948 prompted David Ben-Gurion, as leader of the Jewish ruling authorities the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, to announce Israeli independence in the 'Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel'.⁹⁹ The 14th May witnessed the violent displacement and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people from their livelihoods and homeland by the Israeli army, termed the 'Nakba(h)' or 'catastrophe'.¹⁰⁰ The next day, a group of Arab states – Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon – invaded Palestinian territory in defence of the Arab Palestinian population and in opposition to the creation of a state of Israel on Palestinian land.¹⁰¹ Benny Morris has described this event as the 'pan-Arab invasion', as neighbouring states reacted to the violent massacres against Arab Palestinians and the arrival of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees.¹⁰² The Egyptian government wrote to the President of the Security Council to declare that this 'pan-Arab invasion' was 'to establish security and order in place of chaos and disorder which prevailed and which rendered the country at the mercy of Zionist terrorist gangs who persisted in attacking the peaceful inhabitants, with arms and equipments [sic] amassed by them for that purpose'.¹⁰³

Although the General Assembly met on 14 May to appoint a UN mediator to resolve the crisis,¹⁰⁴ within two weeks the issue was further escalated to the Security Council, where a ceasefire was declared for a month.¹⁰⁵ The five permanent members met on 20 May to agree on a suitable mediator, unanimously appointing Count Folke Bernadotte as United Nations Mediator on Palestine.¹⁰⁶ Bernadotte, a Swedish diplomat and aristocrat, was the recently appointed President of the Swedish Red Cross. His promotion to this role was in response to recent international praise for his bravery and front line role as a negotiator for the Swedish White Buses mission.¹⁰⁷ The mission – named for the colour of the vehicles with a Red Cross symbol painted on the sides –

⁹⁹ 'Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel', 14 May 1948, available at www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx.

¹⁰⁰ Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest*, pp. 147, 194–202.

¹⁰¹ B. Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 180–181.

¹⁰² Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, pp. 180–181.

¹⁰³ UN Doc, S/743, 'Cablegram addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 15 May from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt', 15 May 1948.

¹⁰⁴ UN Doc, A/RES/186 (S-2), '186 (S-2) Appointment and Terms of Reference of a United Nations Mediator in Palestine', 14 May 1948.

¹⁰⁵ UN Doc, S/801, '50 (1948) Resolution of 29 May 1948'.

¹⁰⁶ UN Doc, A/RES/186 (S-2), '186 (S-2) Appointment and Terms of Reference of a United Nations Mediator in Palestine', 14 May 1948.

¹⁰⁷ A. Ilan, *Bernadotte in Palestine: A Study in Contemporary Humanitarian Knight-Errantry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), p. 35.

rescued over 17,000 concentration camp prisoners from many camps in German territory towards the end of the Second World War and brought Bernadotte to the attention of the Swedish government.¹⁰⁸ Bernadotte also briefly acted as an intermediary between Heinrich Himmler and the Allies during April 1945, further impressing the international community with his mediatory skills and political objectivity.¹⁰⁹ It was this experience and expertise that Bernadotte was expected to employ in Palestine on behalf of the UN.

The Security Council resolution also decided Bernadotte should be 'provided with a sufficient number of military observers',¹¹⁰ prompting the construction of what would later be formalised as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO).¹¹¹ Thus, preliminary steps towards an UN-led peacekeeping mission began with the design and deployment of UNTSO in response to the escalating violence of the Arab–Israeli conflict on 29 May 1948.¹¹² The military observers were employed to defend the truce or ceasefire on the ground whilst the mediator undertook political negotiations with leaders.¹¹³ Bernadotte was already supported by the consuls from the UN Truce Commission and five officers from his nation, Sweden, to serve as his personal staff. However, once he arrived he required more personnel in Palestine. He requested that the Truce Commission representatives donate additional military observers from their nations to enable his plan for an:

elaborate control machinery to make sure that no fighting personnel or military material [sic] reaches Palestine or the seven members of the Arab League, and to guarantee that those men of military age who are admitted are not mobilized or trained.¹¹⁴

The first fifty military observers who arrived in Palestine in June 1948 were 'experienced international civil servants with a background of service with the United Nations Secretariat at Headquarters', with most having served as security guards in the New York building.¹¹⁵ Their primary duty was to

¹⁰⁸ S. Persson, 'Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses', *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 9:2 (2000), pp. 237–268.

¹⁰⁹ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/290, 'Count Folke Bernadotte – Activities as Mediator and Biography', 17 September 1948.

¹¹⁰ UN Doc, A/RES/186 (S-2), '186 (S-2) Appointment and Terms of Reference of a United Nations Mediator in Palestine', 14 May 1948.

¹¹¹ UN Doc, S/801, '50 (1948) Resolution of 29 May 1948'.

¹¹² UN Doc, S/801, '50 (1948) Resolution of 29 May 1948'.

¹¹³ T. J. Hamilton, 'Tight Plan Sought: Bernadotte for controls that will make truce in Holy Land work', *The New York Times*, 3 June 1948; M. Brown, 'Jews, Arabs Adopt Jerusalem Truce in Old Walled City', *The New York Times*, 29 April 1948.

¹¹⁴ T. J. Hamilton, 'UN Rejects Move to Send Soviet Observers to Palestine', *The New York Times*, 16 June 1948.

¹¹⁵ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/189, 'Fifty UN Guards to Go to Palestine', 17 June 1948.

maintain the ceasefire along the supply route from the coastal city of Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, on the eastern side of the territory, which ran along the ‘Green Line’ between Israeli and Jordanian-Iraqi forces.¹¹⁶ Under the leadership of Bernadotte, the military observers were to act as his eyes across the region and to investigate any violations of the ceasefire, often putting themselves in dangerous positions on the front line. This unarmed group of military observers and mediatory staff tested the practical implementation and political popularity of a non-governmental international organisation deployed to a conflict context. A UN Press Release also stressed that ‘While on duty in Palestine, they were to continue to wear United Nations guard uniforms’,¹¹⁷ beginning the practice of distinguishing UN-employed staff in conflict spaces through the use of the General Assembly-approved light blue uniforms (in the same colour as the UN flag).¹¹⁸ All observer vehicles were painted white with the large ‘UN’ initialism covering the roof in black ink, to further differentiate the observers from other parties in the conflict.¹¹⁹ UNTSO’s formative construction was far from an organised peacekeeping mission, as would be developed for UNEF; UNTSO’s staffing was informal, fragmentary, and incremental as Bernadotte made an increasing number of requests from Palestine in order to execute his plan for peace.

Just like when recruiting state representatives for UNSCOP, Bernadotte and his UN Truce Commission colleagues chose staff from so-called ‘neutral’ nations for the UN observer group (soon to be re-constituted into UNTSO).¹²⁰ This caused upset from the Soviet Union and Ukraine in the Security Council. The USSR had repeatedly attempted to donate Soviet military observers and had been ignored in debates on Palestine.¹²¹ On 10 June, Andrei Gromyko, USSR permanent representative, insisted on a response from the Security Council following an impassioned speech from his Ukrainian ally, Vasyl Tarasenko:

¹¹⁶ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/191, ‘United Nations Guards Leave for Cairo’, 19 June 1948.

¹¹⁷ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/189, ‘Fifty UN Guards to Go to Palestine’, 17 June 1948.

¹¹⁸ UN Doc, A/RES/167, ‘Resolutions Adopted on the Reports of the Sixth Committee’, October 1947.

¹¹⁹ Although this has led to dangerous instances of copy-cat branding. For instance, in 1992 the Russian army painted its helmets blue in Moldova. The Russian army also painted their vehicles white, ‘UN style’, during the conflict in Tajikistan in 1993. For more, see I. Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 126.

¹²⁰ UN Doc, S/PV.317, ‘317th Meeting of Security Council. 121. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine question’, 10 June 1948, p. 41.

¹²¹ T. J. Hamilton, ‘Russia Insists UN Send Soviet Group to Palestine: US and Canada in Security Unit Oppose Moscow Military Observers’, *The New York Times*, 11 June 1948; Hamilton, ‘UN Rejects Move to Send Soviet Observers to Palestine’, 16 June 1948.

Why were Belgium, the United States of America and France to be the members of the Truce Commission? Was it because these countries were the most impartial or the most interested, or had some special qualifications which are essential for this particular task? No, it was purely a matter of chance and was due to the fact that these countries had their consuls on the spot.¹²²

Tarasenko additionally argued that a continuation of this principle of 'ready, willing, and able' might be an unhelpful way to secure competent or qualified observers. Emboldened from this support, Gromyko added:

On what grounds can the United States object to the utilization of a small group of Soviet military observers in Palestine? There are no legitimate grounds for this objection. No one in his right mind can understand why United States, French and Belgian military observers should be present in Palestine, while USSR observers may not. Why have the United States, France and Belgium more grounds for sending their observers to Palestine, than the USSR?¹²³

In response to this argument, the Canadian permanent representative General Andrew McNaughton argued that it was not in the spirit of the original resolution from April that observers from nations other than the UN Truce Commission would be deployed to Palestine. He insisted that 'the members of the Truce Commission are under an obligation to provide the assistance and the facilities which are needed for this task ... there cannot properly be any question of the right of a country to participate ... the resolutions ... are being properly, correctly and wisely interpreted by our Mediator on the spot.'¹²⁴

On the basis of a lack of Soviet observers in Palestine, the Soviet Union rejected the idea that the 29th May resolution, which had authorised the deployment of military observers to support the operations of Bernadotte, now empowered 'the Mediator to make any such requests or to settle the question of the despatch of military observers'.¹²⁵ On 15 June, Gromyko put forward a proposal to vote on sending USSR military observers to Palestine but struggled to gain any support within the Security Council. José Arce, the Argentinian permanent representative, insisted that Bernadotte's decision to not only recruit from solely UN Truce Commission nations but also hire personal staff from his own nation 'which is not a member of the Security

¹²² UN Doc, S/PV.317, '317th Meeting of Security Council. 121. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine question', 10 June 1948, p. 43.

¹²³ UN Doc, S/PV.317, '317th Meeting of Security Council. 121. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine question', 10 June 1948, p. 44.

¹²⁴ UN Doc, S/PV.317, '317th Meeting of Security Council. 121. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine question', 10 June 1948, p. 44.

¹²⁵ UN Doc, S/PV.320, '320th Security Council Meeting. 130. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine Question', 15 June 1948, p. 6.

Council and has no consul at Jerusalem' must have been 'the course he thought best and we, I deliberately repeat, must respect the wishes of the Mediator and try to interfere as little as possible with the work entrusted to him in Palestine, if we do not wish to put obstacles in his way for one reason or another'.¹²⁶ The Soviet resolution failed to pass with only two votes in favour and nine abstentions. This appeared to conclude the issue in the Security Council, frustrating the Soviet Union and their allies. It also demonstrated a significant diplomatic disagreement over *who* should legitimately be deployed under UN auspices and under *what* logic; expertise or neutrality, proximity to conflict or non-permanent member.

Lie sought to enable the construction of the Israeli state through the military observers' assistance, even if its establishment had infringed his preferred UNSCOP partition plan. Instead, he intended to use the UN to bring the permanent members together and to establish the UN deliberative forums as unique spaces for international cooperation across political divisions in the endeavour of global peace. Fearful of the ramifications if the UN was unable to 'solve' the Israel–Palestine crisis, Lie personally visited US and British ambassadors to encourage a united front in support of Bernadotte and the observers, attempting to resolve Anglo-American disagreement on the Palestine 'problem'.¹²⁷ During this meeting, he outlined the global and organisational consequences if the conflict was left unresolved:

If effective action cannot be taken quickly to deal with the situation in the Middle East, the Secretary-General fears (i) a spread of armed intervention in the Middle Eastern area; (ii) possible repercussions in Kashmir, Indonesia and the Balkans following clear proof of the ineffectiveness of the Security Council; (iii) grave reactions on U.K./U.S. relations; (iv) the *beginning of the end of the United Nations*.¹²⁸

By May 1948, Lie recognised that the situation was fraught with complications. He knew that if the UN could not orchestrate a solution in Palestine, it could prove the ineptitude of the institution in conflict response and conclude the young organisation's operations.

Asserting Expertise, Proposing a UN Guard

Although his efforts at uniting diplomats across the Atlantic on the Palestine question had failed, Lie pivoted to use the Arab–Israeli conflict to promote his

¹²⁶ UN Doc, S/PV.320, '320th Security Council Meeting. 130. Continuation of the discussion on the Palestine Question', 15 June 1948, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Waldman, *Anglo-American Diplomacy and the Palestinian Refugee Problem*.

¹²⁸ British National Archives (henceforth, BNA), FO 371/72676, 'Jackson Memo, 21 May 1948' [author's own emphasis].

idea of formally constructing a UN Guard to foster public faith in the organisation. The escalating violence in the region had convinced Lie that UN staff were at risk of attack, and the current security measures were insufficient in providing a professional environment despite the precarious ceasefire in June 1948. On 10 June 1948, in a commencement speech for Harvard University, he first publicly outlined his aspirations for a 'small guard force, as distinct from a striking force'.¹²⁹ Those within the inner circle of the UN Secretariat felt that the lack of a UN armed force had 'hampered the work of the Security Council and diminished the prestige of the Organization', especially in protecting international peace and security.¹³⁰ In his speech at Harvard, Lie urged the formation of a smaller force 'very soon', pending the 'formation of a larger body as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations'.¹³¹ Lie proposed a force of '1,000–5,000 men, largely drawn from the smaller member states, to be recruited by the Secretary-General and placed at the disposal of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Trusteeship Council'.¹³² His desire to draw from smaller member-state nations would be later adopted in UNEF and other future missions as a solution to concerns about Great Power instrumentalisation and interference. Citing Lie's personal memos and papers to fellow UN Secretariat staff, Ravndal has highlighted the driving motivation for Lie in his plans for a UN Guard:

The proposal also emphasised that 'even more important than the practical usefulness of such a Guard would be the fact that it would symbolize the authority of the United Nations in troubled areas of the world', and could help counteract the growing doubts of the international public regarding the abilities of the UN, as 'the provision of even a very modest Guard force would give people the feeling that the United Nations was being given strength to fulfil its purposes.

In plans to construct an 'international Jerusalem' or an UN Trusteeship administration as part of the partition, Lie and his colleagues in the Secretariat sought to extend the role of the organisation in the protection of the new state through his new UN Guard and thus benefit from the subsequent reputational boon. In a June 1948 memo, UN assistant secretary-general Robert Jackson gushed, 'I do not under-estimate the difficulties of creating this force – but, if you, as Secretary-General, could in fact become the saviour of Jerusalem I believe that the effect on the world as a whole would be electrifying, and the prestige of the United Nations

¹²⁹ Ravndal, "The First Major Test", p. 205.

¹³⁰ Ravndal, "The First Major Test", p. 205.

¹³¹ Hamilton, 'Russia Insists UN Send Soviet Group to Palestine', 11 June 1948.

¹³² E. J. Ravndal, 'Trygve Lie, 1946–1953', in M. Fröhlich and A. Williams (eds.), *The UN Secretary-General and the Security Council: A Dynamic Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 32.

would be vastly increased.¹³³ Although Lie had yet to formally present his proposal to the Security Council in June 1948, already Secretariat staff were excited to use the conflict in Palestine to send armed UN guards to Jerusalem. These internal discussions revealed the core motivation behind the Secretariat leadership's inventive approach to the crisis in Palestine: institutional authority.

However, initial plans for the UN Guard shifted as violence on the ground escalated and threatened the security of UN staff, especially the UN mediator Bernadotte and his personal staff. Having accepted the position as UN mediator in Palestine from Lie, Bernadotte had arrived in Rhodes in May 1948 to set up his headquarters on the Greek island.¹³⁴ As part of his mediator activities, he travelled to Cairo, Tel Aviv, and other major Arab cities to consult with representatives from both sides and to establish a truce. He also visited Palestinian displacement camps and witnessed the humanitarian crisis.¹³⁵ His first progress report, frequently referred to as the Bernadotte plan, was published to the General Assembly on 16 September 1948, condensing his findings from the previous months into fifty-seven pages.¹³⁶ It outlined on his plans for a long-term ceasefire or settlement between the two communities, a two-state solution, and the return of displaced Arab Palestinians to their homes. Bernadotte emphasised, 'the right of [Arab Palestinian] refugees to return to their homes at the earliest practical date should be established' and argued that it would be

'an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries'.¹³⁷

Bernadotte's report angered the Israeli government, who became convinced that Bernadotte was an agent of the British, prompting the pro-Israeli LEHI militia to organise the assassination of the UN mediator on 17 September 1948, the day after his progress report was published to the General Assembly.¹³⁸ UN observer Colonel Andrew Serot, a French-national, was also

¹³³ Ravndal, "'The First Major Test'", p. 206.

¹³⁴ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/290, 'Count Folke Bernadotte – Activities as Mediator and Biography', 17 September 1948.

¹³⁵ Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest*, pp. 218–219.

¹³⁶ UN Doc, A/689, General Assembly, 'Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine Submitted to the Secretary-General for Transmission to the Members of the United Nations', 16 September 1948.

¹³⁷ UN Doc, A/689, General Assembly, 'Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine Submitted to the Secretary-General for Transmission to the Members of the United Nations', 16 September 1948.

¹³⁸ C. D. Stanger, 'A Haunting Legacy: The Assassination of Count Bernadotte', *Middle East Journal*, 42:2 (1988), pp. 260–272.

murdered during the shooting. In a statement to the Security Council, Bunche revealed that the LEHI group had issued 'general threats against United Nations observers' since the first truce began in June 1948.¹³⁹ The subsequent failure of the Israeli police to capture and prosecute the three men involved in the shooting (those arrested were acquitted) led to the UN seeking monetary damages from the Government of Israel via an ICJ case. Having ruled in the UN's favour, the ICJ instructed Israel to remit \$54,628.00.¹⁴⁰ In doing so, the Israeli government expressed 'its most sincere regret that this dastardly assassination took place on Israeli territory, and that despite all its efforts the criminals have gone undetected' although it refused to admit responsibility for the mediator's death.¹⁴¹ Bernadotte's death underlined the risk for UN officials in international conflict zones, further kindling debates about the creation of a UN military but also galvanising a broader discussion about the safety of aid workers and humanitarians in the field.

Taking advantage of Bernadotte's murder, Lie published his UN Guard plan to the member-states, provoking debate within the Security Council and the General Assembly, especially so soon after the disagreement with the Soviets on the nationalities of military observers in Palestine. Just over a week following Bernadotte's assassination, he presented his plans for a UN Guard in a thirteen-page report to the General Assembly titled, 'Demonstrated Need'.¹⁴² He argued that recent crises in Palestine had stressed the UN's functional inability to fully protect its own personnel without an armed force; its diplomatic efforts were disempowered without the protection and, most importantly, defence of a UN military:

Availability of international protective personnel is a *sine quo non* of a Mission's ability to proceed with the necessary confidence and authority to arrange for the free movement of observers and other mission personnel in troubled areas without the suspicion of partiality which the use of local police or national foreign militia engenders. Absence of an independent international body representative of the authority of the United Nations and capable of offering minimum personal protection to United Nations staff has seriously embarrassed the work of the United Nations

¹³⁹ UN Doc, S/1018, 'Cablegram dated 27 September 1948 from Ralph Bunche to the Secretary-General Transmitting Report Regarding the Assassination of the United Nations Mediator', 28 September 1948.

¹⁴⁰ ICJ, 'Reparations for Injuries Suffered in the Service of the United Nations: Advisory Opinion of April 11th, 1949'.

¹⁴¹ UN Doc, S/1506, 'Letter dated 14 June from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Israel to the Secretary-General concerning a claim for damaged [sic] caused to the United Nations by the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte and a reply thereto from the Secretary-General', 14 June 1950.

¹⁴² UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948.

Missions both in the course of hearings and enquiries as well as in the operation of truce arrangements and the rendering of good offices. In Palestine the Mediator emphasized again and again the need to assure to him adequate facilities to enable him to guard mission personnel as well as neutralized buildings and objectives in specified areas. Had even a small security or protective force been available, some injury and loss of life of United Nations personnel might have been avoided, as might also the destruction of vital neutralized objectives, the loss of which could have permanently jeopardized the whole of the Mediator's work.¹⁴³

For Lie and his Secretariat colleagues, the creation of an armed UN Guard would strengthen the organisation and remove any uncertainty that the UN was able to effectively respond to conflict. However, Lie's plans were tentative in comparison with future peacekeeping missions, and he chose to limit the mandate of Guard personnel to safeguarding UN observer staff, equipment, and buildings:

The Secretary-General clearly recognizes that both on practical as well as on legal grounds such a Guard could not be used for enforcement purposes as envisaged under the Charter, nor for the purpose of maintaining law and order. It is, however, his view that the provision of a Guard such as he proposed would immeasurably strengthen the hands of United Nations missions which are established for the express purpose of assuring pacific settlements without recourse to the use of force and would assist them to expedite peaceful settlements.¹⁴⁴

Lie had also sketched out some practical details for the UN Guard. The Guard would be a 'normal unit' or department of the UN Secretariat and would be overseen by the secretary-general.¹⁴⁵ It would be emphatically, '*entirely non-military*'.¹⁴⁶ Although hoping that the Guard could increase to 'several thousand' in response to deployment to a conflict, Lie expected approximately 'eight hundred strong' for the core or 'nucleus' Guard staff, 300 for the permanent staff, and 500 in reserve in their respective countries.¹⁴⁷ To limit the costs of the Guard, Lie suggested that the personnel should be recruited from 'physically fit men without dependants, preferably between the ages of twenty-two to thirty

¹⁴³ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 7. [emphasis in original].

¹⁴⁷ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 3; UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949.

years. (This proviso will tend to reduce the burden of expense associated with the maintenance of dependants and will generally be conducive to the ready availability of personnel for movement into the field'.¹⁴⁸ Under Article 100 of the Charter, Guard personnel would promise obedience to the UN alone, in a similar manner to future peacekeeping missions whereby troops were instructed to show deference to the UN Force Commander, rather than their home nation. Lie noted that 'it will not be organizationally of such a size or character as to be susceptible of use as an aggressive force . . . No trunks [sic], artillery or major offensive weapons will form part of the regular equipment', although the guard members will be provided with 'personal emergency weapons and emergency technical equipment'.¹⁴⁹ Predicting later political complications and delayed deployments, Lie sought for the UN Guard to 'be so recruited, trained and equipped as to be able to furnish supplementary technical service requirements to a United Nations Mission whenever lack of immediate alternative facilities renders this necessary or desirable'. He believed this would also help strengthen the organisation, preventing the repetition of past disorganised or ill-equipped UN missions – as in Palestine – which had 'not only impaired the efficiency of Missions but the authority of the United Nations [. . .] lost in dignity thereby'.¹⁵⁰ 'Though small in numbers', Secretariat official and UN legal counsel Abraham Feller noted to the General Assembly, the UN Guard's 'training and devotion to the international ideal would soon make it a potent assistant in the development and strengthening of the United Nations'.¹⁵¹

It took almost a year for Lie's UN Guard report to be considered until it was finally debated during the Third Session in the General Assembly in April 1949.¹⁵² However, that year the situation in Palestine had changed. Following Bernadotte's assassination in September 1948, Dr Ralph Bunche became acting UN mediator on Palestine in addition to his existing roles as Head of the UN Trusteeship Division and Chief of the Secretariat. Israeli officials, such as Moshe Sharett Foreign Minister of the Provisional Israeli Government, feared that 'a dead Bernadotte might be more powerful and influential than Bernadotte alive',

¹⁴⁸ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, pp. 7–11.

¹⁵⁰ UN Doc, A/656, 'United Nations Guard. Report of the Secretary-General. "Demonstrated Need"', 28 September 1948, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949, p. 24.

¹⁵² UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949; UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.31, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 31st Meeting', 11 April 1949; UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.32, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 32nd Meeting', 11 April 1949.

thus making the late mediator's plan popular to the other key conflict actors.¹⁵³ However, Bernadotte's plan was deemed unfavourable by Israeli and Arab nations, as well as the United States and Britain and failed to receive enough support in the General Assembly. And so, Bunche arrived in Palestine to re-start negotiations.

As UN mediator, Bunche worked closely alongside the mediator's Chief of Staff, William E. Riley, a fellow American, to travel around the Middle East and negotiate the Armistice Agreements with the Arab–Israeli belligerent parties throughout 1949.¹⁵⁴ Bunche was an academic, international civil servant, and prominent African American activist and had had a long career in teaching political science in the United States before he participated in the establishment of the UN in 1944.¹⁵⁵ His most enduring legacy – and the reason for his 1950 Nobel Peace Prize – was his mediation of the Middle East conflict for the UN.¹⁵⁶ Bunche's diplomatic negotiations and presence in the Middle East throughout late 1948 and early 1949 helped to recover some of the reputational damage that Lie had weathered in May 1948 following his inability to unite Anglo-American representatives on the 'Palestine Question'. During this year of mediation, Bunche helped to restore international confidence in the organisation as a valuable tool for protecting international peace and security, and, most importantly, inserted the UN as an integral forum and agent in the navigation of post-colonial statehood and sovereignty.

Following the adoption of all five Armistice Agreements in July 1949 – representing a set of agreements signed by Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria that established a permanent ceasefire and formal Israeli-Palestinian borders – the functions of the acting UN mediator on Palestine were officially transferred to the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). The UNCCP was staffed by three state representatives from France, Turkey, and the United States (elected by the UN permanent member-states) and was located in a demilitarised zone in Jerusalem to enable direct consultation with Israeli and Arab state leadership.¹⁵⁷ These agreements marked the official end of the

¹⁵³ J. Heller, 'Failure of a Mission: Bernadotte and Palestine, 1948', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14:3 (1979), p. 525.

¹⁵⁴ T. J. Hamilton, 'Riley Carries Plan', *The New York Times*, 2 June 1949.

¹⁵⁵ B. Urquhart, 'The Evolution of the Secretary-General', in E. R. May and A. E. Laiou (eds.), *The Dumbarton Oaks Conversations and the United Nations, 1944–1994* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 25.

¹⁵⁶ E. Ben-Dror, 'Ralph Bunche and the 1949 Armistice Agreements revisited', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 56:2 (2020), pp. 274–289; N. Caplan, 'A Tale of Two Cities: The Rhodes and Lausanne Conferences, 1949', *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, 21:3 (1992), pp. 5–34.

¹⁵⁷ UN Doc, A/819, General Assembly, 'United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine: First Progress Report', 15 March 1949.



Figure 1.2 Ralph Bunche talking with Ben Gurion, U1102496INP, 12 December 1948.

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conflict for the UN officials, although thousands of Palestinians remained displaced from their homes and disconnected from their livelihoods.

This ongoing context of displacement enabled the UN to retain a presence on the ground to monitor compliance with the agreements' terms and to further encroach itself into field-based governance in the region. Over his last few months as acting mediator, Bunche oversaw the disbanding of the previous military observer system and the transition of international staff into a formal UNTSO structure from 11 August 1949.¹⁵⁸ Riley, previously the UN mediator's Chief of Staff, became UNTSO's Chief of Staff, and the – almost 700 – military observers under the mediator became the permanent staff of UNTSO.¹⁵⁹ The shift to a more permanent force in the wake of the agreements expanded the

¹⁵⁸ UN Doc, S/1376 II, '73 (1949). Resolution of 11 August 1949', 11 August 1949.

¹⁵⁹ T. Lie, 'Statement before the General Assembly', 29 April 1949, cited in A. W. Cordier and W. Foote, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume I: Trygve Lie, 1946–1953* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 188.

observers' roles and area of operations from their previous duties of monitoring and investigating breaches of the ceasefire along the supply line between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Observers would now focus on protecting the terms of the Armistice Agreements in the whole region, policing border skirmishes and smuggling as well as supervising the ceasefire between belligerents. Bunche returned to his role in the Trusteeship Division in New York (having rejected the position of Assistant Secretary of State from President Truman) and later became the first African American to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as acting UN mediator on Palestine in 1950.¹⁶⁰ During his acceptance speech, Bunche noted his UN colleagues and Bernadotte in contributing to the 'return' of the Arabs and Jews to peace: 'I am but one of many cogs in the United Nations, the greatest peace organization ever dedicated to the salvation of mankind's future on earth.'¹⁶¹ He did not mention any of the Arab or Jewish diplomats who participated in the Armistice Agreements in his speech.

It was the eventual success of Bunche's UN mediation efforts and the Armistice Agreements negotiations that inadvertently foiled Lie's UN Guard plans. Following the publication of Lie's September 1948 'Demonstrated Need' report, diplomatic support for the plan was unstable. The Soviet Union feared that Lie's proposal would breach the UN Charter and circumvent the Security Council – and, therefore, their veto power.¹⁶² As UN officials Andrew Cordier and Wilder Foote commented, 'Quite probably [the USSR's] experience with the military observers sent to Palestine further hardened the Soviet position and fed its suspicions. All the Communist countries were carefully shut out from participating, as they were from UNTSO and similar operations thereafter, with the single exception of the Yugoslav contingent in UNEF.'¹⁶³ Support was also lacking from the United States and Western European nations. Although tentatively supportive of Lie's proposal, Western nations were more dedicated to post-war material recovery and rearmament through policies like the Marshall Plan as the answer to Soviet aggression, rather than to the additional financial burden and military risk of a UN Guard.¹⁶⁴

However, Lie's proposal merited further investigation. The deaths of Thomas C. Watson, a UN Truce Commission member and US-national, and René de

¹⁶⁰ T. J. Hamilton, 'Bunche Ends Task as UN Mediator', *The New York Times*, 28 July 1949.

¹⁶¹ R. Bunche, 'Acceptance Speech, 10 December 1950', available at www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1950/bunche/acceptance-speech/.

¹⁶² T. J. Hamilton, 'The UN and Trygve Lie', *Foreign Affairs*, 29:1 (1950), p. 75.

¹⁶³ Cordier and Foote, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume I*, p. 186.

¹⁶⁴ Cordier and Foote, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume I*, p. 186.

Labarrière, a military observer and French-national,¹⁶⁵ in addition to the assassination of Bernadotte during the first few months of UNTSO operations prompted international concerns about the security of UN staff in Palestine without an armed UN presence in 1948–1949.¹⁶⁶ There were also ongoing questions about the ability of UN military observers and the mediator to even undertake their role *without* military support from an international force. For instance, in July 1948, the ceasefire had become so fractured that military observers and UN equipment were withdrawn from Palestine to Rhodes with the aid of the US army and navy until the violence was de-escalated.¹⁶⁷ But by April 1949, Bunche's Armistice Agreement negotiations were progressing well and fighting in the region had decreased. On 10 May 1949, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok's request for statehood was formally accepted, and Israel became a member-state of the UN General Assembly as a 'peace-loving state' following its third application to the organisation on the condition of its compliance with the Armistice Agreements.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, by the Third Session meeting on the UN Guard in the General Assembly in April 1949,¹⁶⁹ for many member-states, 'the question of the UN Guard was not as urgent as it had been earlier',¹⁷⁰ prompting Lie to instruct a Special Committee to investigate the possibility of a UN Guard rather than build on the momentum of an emergency.¹⁷¹ His revised proposal resulted in the construction of the United Nations Field Service in 1949, a technical service of 300 unarmed personnel and the creation of a panel of standby military observers.¹⁷² The failure of Lie's UN Guard to achieve diplomatic popularity in 1948–1949 demonstrated that the concept of an armed UN force would require the international pressure and anxiety of an ongoing crisis in

¹⁶⁵ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/208, 'UN Military Observer in Palestine Fatally Hurt while Investigating Report of Truce Violation; Another Observer Wounded', 6 July 1948.

¹⁶⁶ UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949, p. 23.

¹⁶⁷ UN Doc, UN Public Information, Press Release PAL/210, 'UN Personnel Withdraws from Palestine', 8 July 1948.

¹⁶⁸ UN Doc, A/RES/273 (III), General Assembly, '273 (III). Admission of Israel to Membership in the United Nations', 11 May 1948.

¹⁶⁹ UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949; UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.31, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 31st Meeting', 11 April 1949; UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.32, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 32nd Meeting', 11 April 1949.

¹⁷⁰ UN Doc, General Assembly, A/AC.24/SR.30, 'Ad Hoc Political Committee, 30th Meeting', 7 April 1949.

¹⁷¹ UN Doc, A/AC.24/45, 'Draft Resolution adopted by the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee at Its 32nd meeting, 11 April 1949'.

¹⁷² UN Doc, A/RES/297 (IV), 'United Nations Field Service and United Nations Panel of Field Observers', 22 November 1949.



Figure 1.3 Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok (centre) and Trygve Lie (right), SAPA980314325180, 29 November 1948.

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addition to a widespread diplomatic lobbying campaign in order to achieve the necessary votes – as would be witnessed during the Suez crisis in 1956.

Although Lie acknowledged in his memoirs that this solution was ‘not at all what [he] had originally intended’,¹⁷³ his UN Guard proposal inspired later calls for a ‘stand-by UN Force’ from military and diplomatic figures, especially following the spate of individual armed peacekeeping missions emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. US Ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, insisted that the slow construction of the Cyprus mission in 1964 had ‘vividly exposed the frailties of the existing machinery’ and called for a standby UN force of national military units to respond immediately to global conflict.¹⁷⁴ He argued, ‘In short, when time is of the essence, there is a dangerous vacuum

¹⁷³ Ravndal, “The First Major Test”, p. 206.

¹⁷⁴ R. N. Gardner, ‘Needed: A Stand-by UN Force: In Cyprus, the U.N. has been called upon for the fourth time on a large scale to keep peace by military means. Here is the case for institutionalizing that capacity.’ *The New York Times*, 26 April 1964.

during the interval while military forces are being assembled on a hit-or-miss basis.' Stevenson pushed beyond Lie's initial Guard plans, however, and called for an UN force entirely divorced from national training or politics: 'we further risk an erosion in the political and moral authority of the UN if troops trained only for national forces are thrust without special training into situations unique to the purpose and methods of the United Nations.'¹⁷⁵

However, as would be similarly seen in India and Pakistan in 1949, with the establishment of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), military observers along ceasefire lines led to an entrenchment of hostilities between two opposing communities in a post-colonial (or post-mandate) context.¹⁷⁶ The ongoing Palestinian refugee crisis evolved throughout the 1950s, and an additional UN agency (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA) was founded in December 1949 to respond to the humanitarian emergency that had been left unresolved through the Armistice Agreements and UN mediation.¹⁷⁷ Although considered a diplomatic success for the UN, UNTSO would remain in Palestine indefinitely due to the continual threat of violence and instability along the armistice borders.

During this post-war period, formative UN arrangements – in Israel and Palestine, India and Pakistan – entrenched an organisational preference for partitions as the best form of conflict response. This principle, in combination with long-term ceasefires and truce agreements, served to isolate the warring parties and populations from one another and further delineate their personal lives and political demands. Partition became the favoured solution as it slowed a conflict down for the international community, creating time for diplomats and technocrats to meet and negotiate. But partition also froze crises for the affected populations, preventing displaced communities from returning home, accessing their old place of work, or interacting with people from the other community in a non-militarised context. By separating families and villages along ethno-nationalist lines and policing their segregation through international forces, the UN constrained the freedom of movement to those dressed in blue and perpetuated colonial forms of division and categorisation. Carving out international spaces or 'buffer zones' in contested territories empowered UN personnel, rather than protected the host communities.

¹⁷⁵ United States Mission to the United Nations, Press Release No. 4374, 'Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Lecture by Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson. "From Containment to Cease-Fire and Peaceful Change", 23 March 1964.

¹⁷⁶ For more on UNMOGIP, see C. Shucksmith and N. D. White, 'United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)', in J. A. Koops, N. MacQueen, T. Tardy, and P. D. Williams (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 133–143.

¹⁷⁷ For more on UNRWA, see A. E. Irfan, 'Petitioning for Palestine: Refugee Appeals to International Authorities', *Contemporary Levant*, 5:2 (2020), pp. 79–96.

Partitions forced affected groups to build lives in liminal spaces without recourse for complaint or self-determination and ‘move on’; for the UN leadership, partition was the solution, not the source of further conflict.

In the case of Israel and Palestine, geopolitical concerns about how the territorial conflict could threaten international peace and security overwhelmed Palestinian and Arab states’ efforts to reject territorial partition and displacement. Instead, establishing UNTSO to police the protracted ceasefire and partition provided the international community with the solution to a problem of its own creation. For some commentators, the longevity of UNTSO has been demonstrative of the mission’s success in keeping the peace and the UN’s ability to separate ‘peacekeeping’ from ‘peacemaking’. For instance, Marrack Goulding has argued that ‘a long-standing peacekeeping operation may sometimes be the least bad option available to the international community if renewed war is to be avoided’.¹⁷⁸ But this rationale implicitly approves of protracted or ‘frozen’ conflicts as a political solution to violence for the international community. Instead, displacement and partition are forms of violence themselves, fostering inter-communal hostility and ever-divergent sovereign imaginaries for the trapped populations. As Aaron Kleiman observed, ‘yesterday’s partitioned country will become tomorrow’s trouble-spot and center of international crisis’.¹⁷⁹

Imitating Military Responsibility in Korea

In the aftermath of the UN’s perceived success in resolving the crisis in Palestine, the organisation had proven itself capable of deploying and managing military staff in conflict settings to the international community. The deployment of UNTSO observers ensured an organisational reaction to threats on the ground, pushing beyond the diplomatic limits of the New York headquarters and establishing value in the field. This value was tested in Korea, as the US government sought to experiment with the functional and political benefits of waging war under a UN flag. Focusing on the innovations and geopolitics of the construction of the UN Command (UNC), this section traces how the UN’s involvement in the Korean War cemented the organisation’s role in field-based military response during the Cold War.

Not long after Bunche’s departure from Palestine, the UN became engulfed in another disputed partition, this time in Korea. Whilst diplomatic battles between the Soviet Union and the United States raged in the UN Security Council and General Assembly during 1950, the Cold War manifested on the ground in North and South Korea, threatening to include the People’s

¹⁷⁸ M. Goulding, ‘The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping’, *International Affairs*, 69:3 (1993), p. 457.

¹⁷⁹ Klieman, ‘The Resolution of Conflicts through Territorial Partition’, p. 300.

Republic of China (PRC) and expand into a ‘Third World War’.¹⁸⁰ Rather than providing military observers and a mediator for this crisis, however, the UN became militarily involved in the Korean War, allying with the US army and providing a command structure for the additional international units in the form of the UNC. The UNC positioned the UN as a belligerent actor within the Korean War, building upon the institutional character practiced during the Arab–Israeli conflict. By restoring stability and maintaining South Korea’s sovereignty, the UNC compounded the success of the organisation during UNTSO and demonstrated the military efficacy of an international military under a UN flag. As Jiyul Kim has argued, the Korean War ‘established the enduring principle that the UN has a key political and military role in resolving conflicts through peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations’.¹⁸¹

The conflict in Korea erupted following years of border disputes between the North and South states, as partisan skirmishes threatened to destabilise the fragile ideological context. Following the conclusion of Second World War and the withdrawal of the Imperial Japanese Army in 1945, Korea was partitioned arbitrarily by the United States and Soviet Union along the 38th parallel in what both sides believed would be a temporary arrangement of five years until a Korean Trusteeship could be established.¹⁸² Anxious about the power vacuum in Korea following the evacuation of Japanese and keen to maintain stability in Asia, the United States sought to learn from the collapse of British and French forms of traditional colonialism in the region and impose their own form of neocolonialism onto post-colonial Korea.¹⁸³ US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk recalled the improvised partition in August 1945:

We finally reached a compromise that would keep at least some US forces on the mainland, a sort of toehold on the Korean peninsula for symbolic purposes . . . Working in haste and under great pressure, we had a formidable task: to pick a zone for the American occupation. Neither Tic nor I was a Korea expert, but it seemed to us that Seoul, the capital, should be in the American sector. We also knew that the U.S. Army opposed an extensive area of occupation. Using a National Geographic map, we looked just north of Seoul for a convenient dividing line but could not find a natural geographical line. We saw instead the thirty-

¹⁸⁰ ‘Moscow Charges US Plot in Korea: Says Dulles Gave Signal for Hostilities There with View to Launching World War III’, *The New York Times*, 2 July 1950.

¹⁸¹ J. Kim, ‘United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation’, in D. W. Boose and J. I. Matray (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War* (Milton Park: Taylor and Francis, 2016), p. 283.

¹⁸² B. Shin, ‘The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945–1946: Focusing on the Change of U.S. Ideas’, *Pacific Focus*, 19:1 (2004), pp. 169–211.

¹⁸³ A. R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945–1950: A House Is Burning* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), pp. 12–13.

eighth parallel and decided to recommend that ... [Our commanders] accepted it without too much haggling, and surprisingly, so did the Soviets.¹⁸⁴

As part of this military compromise, the Cold War powers cut through '75 streams and 12 rivers, intersected many high ridges, crossed 181 small cart roads, 104 country roads. . .', thus dividing 'a nation which had been united and independent for centuries before Japanese colonisation'.¹⁸⁵

Despite the partition initially providing a temporary solution to Cold War interests in Asia, this separation led to the election of two independent Korean states – North Korea and South Korea (or the Republic of Korea) – on 15 August 1948.¹⁸⁶ Following these elections, the UN established the United Nations Commission on Korea in 1948,¹⁸⁷ taking over from the activities of a Temporary Commission in Korea,¹⁸⁸ to encourage the 'unification of Korea and the integration of all Korean security forces' and observe the 'actual withdrawal of the occupying forces'.¹⁸⁹ From 1948 to 1950, the majority of Soviet Union and American troops evacuated from Korea, leaving behind advisory groups in command of both Korean militaries. However, three years of partition had cultivated two independent states with ideologically opposed governmental politics, superpower interests, and hardening nationalist imaginaries: both advocated forced reunification and each claimed to be the legitimate Korean government.

As Korean re-unification became a remote prospect with this dual declaration of independence, partisan violence between South Korean Labour (or Communist) Party and groups of conservative and authoritarian Koreans – US supported – erupted across the southern state in 1948 and 1949, threatening to push beyond the 38th parallel and endanger thousands of Koreans in the process.¹⁹⁰ After years of partisan conflict in Republic terri-

¹⁸⁴ D. Rusk cited in J. J. Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History* (New York: Springer, 2006), pp. 37–38.

¹⁸⁵ C. Forbes, *The Korean War* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2010), pp. 49–50.

¹⁸⁶ L. Gordenker, *The United Nations and the Peaceful Unification of Korea: The Politics of Field Operations, 1947–1950* (New York: Springer, 2012), p. 5.

¹⁸⁷ The United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) was established to replace the United Nations Commission on Korea on 7 October 1950 in order to establish an independent democratic government for all of Korea: UN Doc, A/RES/376(V), '376 (V). The Problem of the Independence of Korea', 7 October 1950.

¹⁸⁸ UN Doc, A/RES/112(II), '112 (II). The Problem of the Independence of Korea', 14 November 1947.

¹⁸⁹ UN Doc, A/RES/195(III), '195 (III). The Problem of the Independence of Korea', 12 December 1948.

¹⁹⁰ Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945–1950*, p. 2.

tory,¹⁹¹ the conflict between the two Korean nations erupted in the early hours of 25 June 1950 as the North Korean government saw an opportunity to reunify Korea under their authority.¹⁹² North Korean troops, trained and equipped by the Soviet Union,¹⁹³ launched an artillery attack into South Korean territory and an amphibious intervention on the island's eastern coast, surprising the Southern Koreans and the US army.¹⁹⁴ In the PRC, Mao released thousands of Koreans from the People's Liberation Army in order for them to fight with the North Korean People's Army and sent over 300,000 Chinese troops to fight on the 38th parallel, instructing them to remove Chinese Army insignia from their uniforms.¹⁹⁵ This organised act of aggression breached an existing General Assembly resolution that instructed both Korean governments to 'refrain from any acts derogatory to the purposes of removing 'barriers to economic, social and other friendly intercourse caused by the division of Korea'.¹⁹⁶ The same day, the Security Council voted to call upon UN member-states to 'render every assistance to the United Nations' in the execution of ceasing hostilities in Korea and restoring peace to the region.¹⁹⁷ This condemnation was extended on 27 June as the Security Council voted to recommend that the UN member-states 'furnish' the Republic of Korea with military support against the invasion.¹⁹⁸

Trygve Lie was personally insulted by the North Korean intervention, conceiving it as a violation of the UN Charter and a direct attack on the UN, as the organisation had overseen the two states' elections in 1948.¹⁹⁹ Over the next fortnight, US representatives met with Lie and his Secretariat officials to develop a plan for the UN to respond militarily to the crisis and to counteract the communist intervention, seeking to expand the existing

¹⁹¹ B. Hwang, 'Revolutionary Armed Struggle and the Origins of the Korean War', *Asian Perspective*, 12:2 (1988), pp. 123–138.

¹⁹² 'War Is Declared by North Koreans', *The New York Times*, 25 June 1950.

¹⁹³ M. O'Neill, 'Soviet Involvement in the Korean War: A New View from the Soviet-Era Archives', *OAH Magazine of History*, 14:3 (2000), p. 20.

¹⁹⁴ M. E. Henke, *Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 66.

¹⁹⁵ X. Li, 'China's War for Korea: Geostrategic Decisions, War-Fighting Experience and High-Priced Benefits from Intervention, 1950–1953', in J. Blaxland, M. Kelly, and L. B. Higgins (eds.), *In from the Cold: Reflections on Australia's Korean War* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2020), p. 65.

¹⁹⁶ UN Doc, General Assembly, A/RES/293 (IV), 'The Problem of the Independence of Korea', 21 October 1949.

¹⁹⁷ UN Doc, S/1501, 'Resolution Concerning the Complaint of Aggression upon the Republic of Korea Adopted at the 473rd Meeting of the Security Council on 25 June 1950'.

¹⁹⁸ UN Doc, S/1511, Security Council, '83 (1950). Resolution of 27 June 1950'.

¹⁹⁹ E. J. Ravndal, "'A Force for Peace": Expanding the Role of the UN Secretary-General under Trygve Lie, 1946–1953', *Global Governance*, 23:3 (2017), p. 454.

Security Council permissions. Despite the constraints of the UN Charter, the UN could potentially deploy armed forces under Security Council authorisation in reaction to a breach of the peace, as Lie had attempted with his UN Guard proposal. However, for seven months of 1950, the Soviet Union had chosen to boycott the UN Security Council as the UN had accepted a representative of Taiwan to take the PRC's chair.²⁰⁰ The absence of the Soviets from the Council meant that the five permanent members of the UN were reduced to four; an absence that legally had never been accounted for in the drafting of the UN Charter. This prompted a legal and diplomatic issue: should a resolution be authorised by the Security Council if all permanent members of the Security Council are not present and voting, especially one authorising the deployment of an armed international force to combat a sovereign nation? For legal scholar Josef Kunz, the option of *not* responding to the invasion of South Korea likely presented more of a threat to the organisation than the legal complications of voting without a permanent-member present. He argued that 'to have done nothing in the case of a flagrant armed attack would have meant the end of the United Nations, just as to have done nothing in the case of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 was the beginning of the end for the League of Nations'.²⁰¹ Organisational prestige had motivated the secretary-general's decision-making during the Arab–Israeli conflict, and, in the context of Korea, it combined with anger over the North Korean attack to encourage Lie to plan UN military action with the US government.

Whilst the international community waited for the US and UN representatives to negotiate the design of the UNC and develop a draft resolution for the Security Council, public commentators contributed their own imaginaries of an international military.²⁰² One example published in *The New York Times* on 7 July 1950 suggested that 'even the smallest of [UN member states] can provide at least a token force, either of regular troops or volunteers, to form a United Nations army which would comprise many nations, races and creeds, and which would contain a substantial contingent of Asiatic troops whose mere presence would refute any charge of "white imperialism"', thus predicting later UN efforts to avoid accusations of colonialism during the peacekeeping mission in Congo.²⁰³

By July, the legal quandary of the Soviet Union's boycott was disregarded by UN officials and formally recorded as an absence the UN Security Council,

²⁰⁰ M. Share, 'From Ideological Foe to Uncertain Friend: Soviet Relations with Taiwan, 1943–82', *Cold War History*, 3:2 (2002), pp. 5–6.

²⁰¹ Kunz, 'Legality of the Security Council Resolutions', p. 138.

²⁰² T. J. Hamilton, 'Most UN Delegates Favor Use of Land Force in Korea', *The New York Times*, 1 July 1950.

²⁰³ 'For a UN Army', *The New York Times*, 7 July 1950.

allowing the attending states to authorise the UNC.²⁰⁴ The UNC resolution approved the force under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, making it an 'agent' of the Security Council, and authorised it to undertake forceful action for the settlement of the conflict in the name of world peace. The same legal provision would not be undertaken by the UN until the post-Cold War era following the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1991.²⁰⁵ The decision to allow the vote without the Soviet Union representative demonstrated the procedural gatekeeping power held by UN bureaucrats and legal advisors. By choosing to provide a physical and diplomatic forum to host the vote, the UN staff functionally legitimised the process. Numerous legal scholars addressed this issue in 1950–1951, highlighting the troubling context of an international organisation deciding to pursue a vote on international military action *before* independent jurisprudential interrogation of the UN Charter.²⁰⁶ For the USSR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, the Security Council votes on the Korean War were illegal and invalid due to the absence of the Soviet representative.²⁰⁷ They pointed out that Article 28 of the UN Charter states that 'Each member of the Security Council shall for this purpose be represented at all times at the seat of the Organization', with 'for this purpose' meaning the continuous function of the Security Council. In opposition, the United States asserted that the first sentence of Article 28 prohibited intentional absences within the Council. The US State Department released a statement which specified their interpretation of the UN Charter: 'The Security Council shall be so organized as to be able to function continuously . . . injunction is defeated if the absence of a representative of a permanent member is construed to have the effect of preventing all substantive action by the Council.'²⁰⁸

Once the resolution passed, UNC staffing and strategy was developed and approved by US officials in Washington rather than the UN leadership or a UN commission in New York, despite the name of the force. As this would be the first coordinated military mission under UN auspices, the United States sought to restrict the UN Secretariat's involvement in the recruitment arena, exploiting the organisation's limited experience and military machinery. As Marina Henke has argued,

²⁰⁴ UN Doc, S/1588, '84 (1950). Resolution of 7 July 1950'.

²⁰⁵ D. H. Finnie, *Shifting Lines in the Sand: Kuwait's Elusive Frontier with Iraq* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²⁰⁶ Kunz, 'Legality of the Security Council Resolutions', pp. 137–142; Y. Liang, 'Abstention and Absence of a Permanent Member in Relation to the Voting Procedure in the Security Council', *The American Journal of International Law*, 44:4 (1950), pp. 694–708; H. Kelsen, *The Law of the United Nations: A Critical Analysis of Its Fundamental Problems* (London: London Institute of World Affairs, 1950).

²⁰⁷ Kunz, 'Legality of the Security Council Resolutions', p. 141.

²⁰⁸ *United States Policy in the Korean Crisis* (US Department of State Pub. 3922, Far Eastern Series 34), pp. 61–63.

Andrew Cordier, the executive assistant to the UN secretary-general, proposed that a ‘Security Council Committee’ should be in charge of the process. This committee would meet in private and decide which coalition offers could be accepted. US officials, however, largely disagreed with this idea. They felt that it was ‘not practical for the United Nations to get into the actual use and control of [military] assistance . . . and it was unthinkable to use the [UN] Military Staff Committee in any way.’ Rather, the UN and, in particular, Secretary-General Lie should operate as no more than a ‘post office’. They would transmit to the United States information submitted to them by UN member states about their deployment preferences.²⁰⁹

Beginning with the recruitment of the Force Commander, the United States sidelined the UN Secretariat officials from the UNC staffing process, preventing the organisation from shaping the character of the force as they would in later missions. On 8 July 1950, US President Truman assigned General Douglas MacArthur as commanding general of the UNC, impressed with MacArthur’s success during the Second World War.²¹⁰ In contrast to future UN missions, permanent members of the Security Council were encouraged to donate troops to Korea and the United States, Britain, and France all participated militarily. The UN did supply ten destroyers and frigates (types of warships) from its own stores to the UNC, establishing that the organisation had begun to invest in arms for its own participation in conflict by 1950.²¹¹ Ultimately, despite Lie’s best efforts to influence the design of the UNC and increase the power of the UN Secretariat in shaping strategy in the field, the US government refused to compromise their authority in commanding the force.²¹²

Once on the ground in September 1950, this multilateral force was militarily and strategically led by the pre-existing US personnel on the ground and heavily reliant on US Army logistical support.²¹³ The ten countries who militarily unified against the ‘communist invasion’ from the North under the UN flag by the end of 1950 – Britain, the Philippines, Australia, Turkey, Thailand, the Netherlands, France, Greece, Canada, and New Zealand – had been extensively lobbied by the US government to donate troops to the Korean War through the use of ‘personal appeals, incentives, and threats’.²¹⁴ Instrumentalising existing diplomatic ties and bullying tactics, the United States was able to organise

²⁰⁹ Henke, *Constructing Allied Cooperation*, p. 70.

²¹⁰ T. J. Hamilton, ‘Action by Council: American Troops on Their Way to the Front in Korea’, *The New York Times*, 8 July 1950.

²¹¹ G. L. Roffman, *Korean War Order of Battle: United States, United Nations, and Communist Ground, Naval, and Air Forces, 1950–1953* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), p. 118.

²¹² Ravndal, “‘A Force for Peace’”, p. 455.

²¹³ Kim, ‘United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation’, p. 289.

²¹⁴ Henke, *Constructing Allied Cooperation*, p. 67.

donations from forty-eight (out of a possible fifty-nine) UN member-states, 'including personnel, cash, food, and medicine' as well as support from an additional nine non-member-states that also sent provisions – this number included Japan and West Germany, which were both occupied in 1950.²¹⁵

The Soviet Union broke their boycott of the UN Security Council in August 1950 and vetoed any resolution relating to the support of the UNC, rejecting Lie's as secretary-general in retribution for his involvement in the construction of the force. The USSR representatives used their veto to fire Lie as the end of his first five-year term as secretary-general approached in October.²¹⁶ In a humiliating process where Lie struggled to lobby definitive support from any of the permanent members, the vote on the new secretary-general was moved to the General Assembly after the Soviet Union made clear that they would veto any vote supporting Lie in the Security Council.²¹⁷ On 2 November, Lie attained the most votes in the second round of elections, and the General Assembly extended his term by three years, although the Soviet Union refused to recognise the election as legal and thus Lie as secretary-general.²¹⁸ This, to date, has been the only example of a secretary-general election held by the General Assembly in response to questions on the legality of the vote.²¹⁹ Following two years of denunciations from the Soviet Union and PRC, Lie resigned from the office in November 1952. He was replaced by Dag Hammarskjöld the following April. This experience damaged Lie's confidence and, he believed, affected his ability to negotiate an armistice in the Korean War. In his resignation speech, he stated,

'The United Nations has thrown back aggression in Korea. There can be an Armistice if the Soviet Union, the Chinese People's Republic and the North Koreans are sincere in their wish to end the fighting. If they are sincere then the new Secretary-General who is the unanimous choice of the five permanent members the Security Council and of the General Assembly, may be more helpful than I can be.'²²⁰

Following the procedural complications of the secretary-general elections, the United States admitted concerns that the UNC would be eternally held

²¹⁵ Kim, 'United Nations Command and Korean Augmentation', p. 285.

²¹⁶ T. J. Hamilton, 'UN Council Meets Today on Lie Term: Takes Lead in Proposed 2 or 3 Year Extension but Soviet Stand Is Unknown', *The New York Times*, 9 October 1950; G. Barrett, 'Position of UN Chief Aide Is Thrust into Uncertainty: Council Tells Assembly of Failure to Agree on a Secretary General', *The New York Times*, 13 October 1950.

²¹⁷ 'Soviet to Shun Lie If He Stays in Post', *The New York Times*, 31 October 1950.

²¹⁸ T. J. Hamilton, 'Lie Term Extended as US Secretary for 3 Years', *The New York Times*, 2 November 1950.

²¹⁹ F. T. P. Plimpton, 'Everyone Knows What a Secretary Is, and What a General Is, but: What Is a Secretary General?', *The New York Times*, 27 November 1966.

²²⁰ T. Lie, 'Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Announces His Resignation', *British Pathe*, Film ID: 2636.23, 10 November 1952, available at www.britishpathe.com/video/trygve-lie-resigns.

hostage by the UN voting system. The multilateral character of the UNC required a functioning voting forum in order to maintain the authorisation of the force in Korea. To remedy this, the United States introduced a transformative legal precedent that would shift the power of permanent members within the UN. The creation of the 'Uniting for Peace' General Assembly resolution in November 1950 permitted other member-states to circumvent a permanent member's right to veto in cases of a breach to the peace and to introduce the resolution to the General Assembly.²²¹ This innovation would later enable the deployment of UNEF in 1956 despite the veto of two permanent member-states (Britain and France). The combination of the procedural demands of the UNC and the diplomatic hostility of the USSR led to the expansion of General Assembly functions from exclusively deliberative to potentially operational; capable of authorising 'appropriate measures' for the resolution of international peace.

However, although fighting under the UN flag, the UNC was far from an UN-led armed mission.²²² Although transnational in design, the UNC was directed towards the protection and supremacy of pro-US, anticommunist interests in Korea. As Kim has suggested, 'A cynic might say that the UN flag was merely an imprimatur of international cooperation and support that legitimized US policy to contain communism' as the military responsibility of the UN for the force was minimal.²²³ The UNC mandate characterised the United States and the Republic of Korea as the parties fighting for international peace and demonised North Korea as communist aggressors, seeking the destabilisation of the region. In the Soviet Union, the government attempted to counteract this narrative and characterise North Korea and its communist allies as those fighting for world peace, pushing back against Western imperialism in Asia and using the Korean War to highlight the military aggression of the United States.²²⁴ Neither superpower acknowledged their own role in the historical foundations of this crisis and their geopolitical interests in perpetuating the war for propaganda. However, the UN auspices of the UNC provided the US army's strategy in Korea with international legitimacy, counteracting Soviet denunciations and casting the force with a moralising guise; the UNC waged war in the name of peace.

²²¹ A. J. Carswell, 'Unblocking the UN Security Council: The Uniting for Peace Resolution', *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 18:3 (2013), pp. 453–480.

²²² P. Biddiscombe, 'Branding the United Nations: The Adoption of the UN Insignia and Flag, 1941–1950', *The International History Review*, 42:1 (2020), p. 20.

²²³ D. Kritsiotis, 'The Elusive Peace of Panmunjom', in M. Craven, S. Pahuja, and G. Simpson (eds.), *International Law and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 65/66.

²²⁴ Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, p. 16.

But the UNC was also a transformative step for an organisation previously limited to mediatory solutions and observer missions, such as UNTSO and UNMOGIP. The military character of the UNC and its construction in the UN headquarters provided legal, diplomatic, and operational precedents for future UN missions, demonstrating the potential value of the organisation as a field-based agent as well as a forum for nation-state debates. It was also a symbolic extension of UN diplomatic activities into a conflict zone, providing inspiration for later missions' efforts to emulate and prioritise symbols of occupation and military authority.²²⁵ The UNC served as a vital platform for the UN to *imitate* military responsibility, drawing the public's attention to UN branding and authorisation whilst the US benefitted from the UN mandate and 'playing the part' of an army fighting for peace. Although the organisation was highly restricted in shaping the conflict on the ground and managing the force independently, the UNC was an important experiment for the UN Secretariat. It provided lessons in staffing multilateral military coalitions and legal precedents for UN forums; these principles would be integral in establishing later UN peacekeeping operations.

Conclusion

Following the creation of the UN, liberal internationalists called for the organisation to test the waters and explore the military potential in-built in the UN Charter, using the Military Staff Committee and the UN's public forums to push the institution further into the military sphere.²²⁶ Powerful member-states began to see that the UN's encroachment into the conflict zones – and more broadly the militarisation of 'international peace' – opened up potential for state collaboration, collusion, and interference on the ground. By tracing the history of peacekeeping through early plans for international military operations, this chapter has shown how the idea of an international reputation was emerging by the mid-1950s and integral the function was to the growing authority of the UN as the leading international organisation in peace and security. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali assessed in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, the authority of the UN to deploy military action 'is essential to the credibility of the United Nations as a guarantor of international security'.²²⁷

²²⁵ The use of the UN flag by the UN Command was authorised under UNSC Resolution 84: UN Doc, S/1588, 'Resolution 84: Complaint of Aggression upon the Republic of Korea', 7 July 1950.

²²⁶ A. Novosseloff, *The UN Military Staff Committee: Recreating a Missing Capacity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

²²⁷ UN Document (henceforth, UN Doc), A/47/277, 'Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping', 17 June 1992, para. 43.

The escalation of experiments in an international military from the formative operations in the Saar in the interwar years to the development of the international armed force under US command in Korea helped pave the way for an UN-led, armed peacekeeping mission in 1956.²²⁸ These tentative steps in a range of different conflict contexts and territorial settings legitimised the international organisation as a leader in conflict response, securing its position within military, diplomatic, humanitarian, and development spheres of influence. The perception of UNC success – for those aligned with the Western member-states – intensified in an international demand for a militarised UN that had been reinvigorated by post-war disarmament debates and reimagined by Trygve Lie's plans for the UN Guard in Palestine. As the new secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, attempted to bury past antagonism between the UN and the Soviet Union, as well as quash developing anti-colonial tensions within the Afro-Asian bloc in the General Assembly, the geopolitical hierarchy of the UN forums faced a dramatic transformation that would have implications for the next twenty years of operations. The decisions and designs from past international military debates and experiments would now be put into practice.

²²⁸ For more specifically on the UN involvement in the Korean crisis, see R. Barnes, 'Chief Administrator or Political "Moderator"? Dumbarton Oaks, the Secretary-General and the Korean War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 54:2 (2019), pp. 347–367.