Peace and Human Security

Four fundamental ideas have traditionally driven UN responses to the challenges of war and armed conflict:

- replacing war and conflict with the rule of law and negotiations;

- using preventive diplomacy by the Secretary-General and others to forestall armed conflicts;

- linking measures of disarmament to development in order to diminish the structural causes of war and conflict;

- interposing international buffer and observer forces to keep the peace.

Two further ideas entered during the last two decades:

- the responsibility to protect (R2P) individuals when their own governments are manifestly unwilling or unable to do so

- human security that shifts security concerns away from exclusive preoccupation with military protection of states toward the safety and empowerment of individuals

After more than six decades, punctuated by at least 150 national or regional conflicts and wars with 20 million deaths, it is easy to see the UN's efforts in these areas as little but failure. Set against the record of the half-century before the world organization was created, however, the change has been remarkably positive. The toll of the two world wars of the twentieth century was 70 to 90 million dead, 50 million more if the deaths due to the worldwide surge of influenza of 1918-1920 are counted. In terms of the numbers of people affected by armed conflicts, terrible as they are, since 1945 the UN has made important contributions.

Replacing Conflict with the Rule of Law

With the UN Charter came a sea change in international attitudes about war. Powerful countries could no longer engage in aggression without challenge from the international community nor could they undertake military operations without seeking some form of international legitimacy as justification. The Charter and debates in the Security Council, however inadequate and influenced by narrow calculations of national interests, have set out a frame of law to which parties can and often do appeal for justification. Moreover, these appeals are made to a Security Council that includes representatives of some of the smallest and weakest countries. In addition, the world's media can also use these same standards to judge the legality of decisions to go to war.
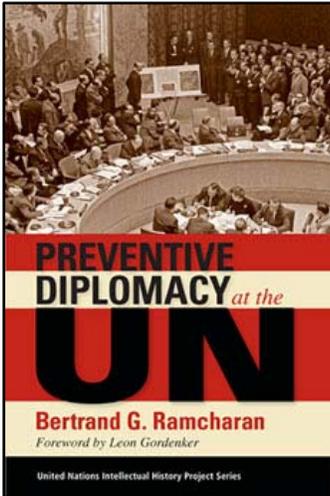
The last six-and-a-half decades provide several positive examples of how attitudes toward war and conquest have changed profoundly. The ending of many centuries of Franco-German military conflict is perhaps the most dramatic, although there are other examples in Europe and smaller ones in Latin America, as for instance between Chile and several of its neighbors. The ending of military control of colonies is another. It is important not to overstate these successes, but it is equally wrong not to recognize the changes.

This said, as Thomas G. Weiss and Ramesh Thakur point out in their forthcoming UNIHP volume *Global Governance: An Unfinished Journey*, the major powers, and especially those that possess nuclear weapons, have always preferred to keep serious discussion about arms and security in bilateral or regional arenas where they have greater control. Notwithstanding Charter principles, the UN's role in the area of peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy, arms proliferation and disarmament, and international and human security has generally come second to what the permanent members of the Security Council choose to take up in their own ways first.

Preventive Diplomacy

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Preventive diplomacy is one of the clearest and most innovative ideas of the UN, initially developed by Ralph Bunche in the early 1950s, though elaborated further and more formally by

Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld a few years later. Bertrand Ramcharan's UNIHP volume on *Preventive Diplomacy* (2008) tells the story of how this idea emerged in response to a diversity of worldwide challenges and combined intelligent foresight, careful and well-informed analysis, and bold initiative. Ramcharan identifies many cases where preventive diplomacy has succeeded. A most notable example is Secretary-General U Thant's role in defusing the Cuban missile crisis.

Dag Hammarskjöld formally articulated the concept and put down the "markers on the practice of preventive diplomacy" that are still very much in use today: the Secretary-General's engagement should not be automatic; he should decide if and when his involvement might bear fruit or not; and he is the one who decides when and where to send his representatives on special missions or out-post them in particular situations. While sometimes an idealistic stretch, the concept of preventive diplomacy has also expanded to address the root-causes of armed conflict, including economic and social causes.

Later Secretaries-General carried the approach further. Pérez de Cuéllar elaborated the need for a global watch in *Perspectives for the 1990s* and Boutros-Ghali stressed the need for economic and social equity in *An Agenda for Peace*. Kofi Annan added the challenge of comprehensive preventive strategies, including his "two sovereignties" and "the responsibility to protect." In short, preventive diplomacy over the years has been an evolving practice, with Annan eventually speaking of a "culture of prevention."

Disarmament and Development

Disarmament *with* development and *for* development has been another UN contribution to ideas. France was one of the first governments to introduce proposals linking disarmament with development. In 1955, it proposed that all participating states should agree to reduce their military spending by a certain percentage that would increase year by year. The resources released would be paid into an international fund, 25 percent of which would be allocated to development, the rest left at the disposal of the government concerned. Other governments have also made proposals: the Soviet Union in 1956, Brazil in 1964, Senegal and France in 1978. In 1973, the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for a 10 percent one-time reduction in military budgets by the five permanent members of the Security Council. It encouraged other states to do the same, noting that 10 percent of the sum saved would be allocated to development.

Over the years, UN staff members have explored approaches for combining disarmament with development. The action proposals for the First Development Decade included references to the potential contribution from disarmament to development. This included the calculation that an acceleration of economic growth in developing countries from 3.5 to 5 percent per year could result if no more than 10 percent of the savings from halving military spending was reallocated to development.

In terms of ideas, the most creative and comprehensive of the UN reports on disarmament and development was the so-called Thorsson report of 1982, by a group chaired by Inga Thorsson, then minister for disarmament of Sweden. This report brought together disarmament, development, and security. It identified the strongly negative relationship between arms spending and economic growth in developing countries, which led to the major conclusion that "the world can either continue to pursue the arms race with characteristic vigor or move consciously and with deliberate speed toward a more stable and balanced social and economic development. It cannot do both."

The study was presented seven years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although it was considered wildly optimistic and visionary at the time, the report's disarmament scenario and its

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projections to the year 2000 in fact provided a close approximation to actual arms expenditure in that year.

This said, the reductions in military spending only continued until the late 1990s, and the benefits emerged differently from the way the Thorsson team had envisioned the peace dividend. The assumption had been that reductions in military spending would free up resources that could then be used for other purposes, including development of the South. In fact, the reductions in arms spending by a quarter or more from 1989 to 1996 in the United States led to major reductions in the U.S. budgetary deficit. This in turn reduced interest rates in the United States and elsewhere and contributed to the long boom in the world's largest economy. The knock-on effects on the rest of the world spread the benefits and stimulated growth elsewhere.

In other words, the peace dividend came not as increased expenditure from freed-up resources but rather from higher growth stimulated in many countries around the world. Instead of furthering development in the poorest countries, economic growth was stimulated in the rich countries and some benefits trickled down to poor countries, although not to all and certainly not to the least developed among them.

Even before the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military expenditures were on the rise in the major powers and in a number of developing countries, though by no means in the majority of them. World military expenditures in 2007 were estimated to have reached about 2.5 percent of world GNP, an increase of 45 percent in real terms since 1998—the low-point of post–Cold War military expenditures. In that year, the United States had reached its highest level of military spending since World War II, and accounted for 45 percent of world military expenditures.

To put military expenditure in current perspective, the UN's record-breaking expenditures of over $5 billion on peace operations in 2008 represented less than half of 1 percent of world military spending.

Peacekeeping

"Peacekeeping" is not specifically mentioned in

the Charter but became the UN's primary function in the domain of peace and security during the Cold War. The use of troop contingents for this purpose began during the 1956 crisis in Suez. Contemporary accounts such as Max Harrelson's *Fires All Around the Horizon* credit Lester B. Pearson, then Canada's secretary of state for external affairs and later prime minister, with proposing to the General Assembly that Secretary-General Hammarskjöld organize an "international police force that would step in until a political settlement could be reached" (1989, 89). Hammarskjöld along with Ralph Bunche and Brian Urquhart helped put flesh on the bones of Pearson's proposal.

From 1948 to 1988, peacekeepers typically served two functions: *observing the peace* (that is, monitoring and reporting on the maintenance of cease-fires) and *keeping the peace* (that is, providing an interpositional buffer between belligerents and establishing zones of disengagement). The forces were normally composed of troops from small or nonaligned states; permanent members of the Security Council and other major powers made troop contributions only under exceptional circumstances. These lightly armed neutral troops were symbolically deployed between belligerents who had agreed to stop fighting; they rarely used force and then only in self-defense and as a last resort.

From 1948 to 1978, the United Nations deployed thirteen peacekeeping operations. Close to 500,000 military, police, and civilian personnel—distinguished from national soldiers by their trademark powder-blue helmets and berets—served in UN peacekeeping forces during the Cold War, and some 700 lost their lives in UN service during this period. In December 1988, the UN received the Nobel Peace Prize for its peacekeeping activities.
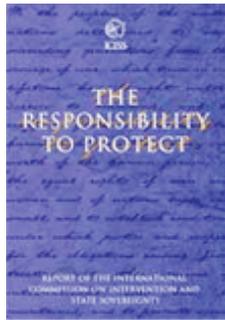
The post–Cold War era led to a vast expansion of UN peace operations. While growth slowed somewhat in 2007, the United Nations still deployed over 100,000 persons in peace operations—about 82,000 uniformed personnel (troops, observers, and police) plus another 20,000 civilian staff—with expenditures of some $5 billion. And approved operations that are not yet on the ground could increase those numbers still more dramatically.

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Responsibility to Protect

Perhaps the most dramatic innovation of the UN in the last few years is the idea of the "responsibility to protect," now commonly referred to as "R2P." The basic idea behind the R2P doctrine is that human beings count for more than the sacrosanct sovereignty enshrined in Charter Article 2 (7), which emphasizes noninterference in domestic affairs.

The idea emerged from the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty's (ICISS) 2001 report *The Responsibility to Protect*. The commission's work grew directly from the inability of the Security Council to act in two particular instances: in the face of mass murder in Rwanda in 1994 and in the Kosovo disaster in 1999. The former resulted in action that was too little and too late (and 800,000 deaths in a matter of weeks), and the latter, in the view of many, in too much action too soon when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization began its "humanitarian bombing" without Security Council approval.

ICISS pushed the envelope in three ways:

- It argued that sovereignty also encompasses a state's responsibility to protect populations within its borders.

- It shifted the emphasis toward the possibility—if not the legal obligation—of outsiders to come to the rescue of those suffering from war and violence.

- It developed a three-part framework for the R2P that includes the responsibility to prevent and the responsibility to rebuild before and after the responsibility to react in the eye of a storm. The commission argued that it is essential to do everything possible to avoid military intervention and to commit to helping to mend societies should the use of military force be required.

The final text of the UN's World Summit Outcome Document of 2005 reaffirmed the primary roles of states to protect their own citizens. At the same time, it also made clear that international intervention is needed when countries fail to shield their citizens from or, more likely, actively sponsor genocide and other mass-atrocity crimes.

Again, normative advance does not necessarily mean action, as the 300,000 dead and 3 million displaced in Darfur demonstrate. But a norm is emerging with considerable state practice behind it that articulates the collective international responsibility to protect human beings whose governments refuse to do so or are actually the cause of murder and ethnic cleansing. However, that military force used with international approval for human protection remains a policy option at all represents a significant new middle ground in international relations.

Human Security

The sixth major contribution of the UN in the area of peace and security is the development of the concept of human security, perhaps the most radical shift in thinking on peace and the avoidance of conflict since the UN was founded. Neil MacFarlane and Yuen Foong Khong unpack the idea and its evolution in their UNIHP volume *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (2006).
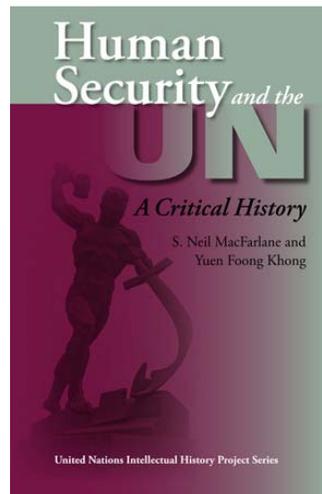
The notion of human security was first presented in the *Human Development Report 1994*: "The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation states than to people" (22-4). This report argued for the need for new thinking—for a concept of human security focused on the protection of

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people from a variety of threats to their life and dignity.

The concept was in large measure the intellectual creation of Mahbub ul Haq and the UNDP's Human Development Report team. Human security also reflected the new possibilities and priorities that emerged with the end of the Cold War, which had produced a decreased in East-West tensions but a rapid proliferation of small arms, increasing divisions based on ethnicity and identity, and a growing salience of civil wars.

The new ideas of human security were not without controversy, some of which remains. Nor was there—or is there—an agreed-upon and uniform definition. In spite of this, within a decade, the human security concept became central to the review of security issues within the UN and within the reports of several UN-related commissions: the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, the Commission on Human Security, and the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. It was also incorporated in the Secretary-General's own report, *In Larger Freedom*, prepared for the World Summit in 2005.

Definitions of Human Security and Evolution of Concepts

A focus on the human being defines the *referent* object of security away from the state and toward the individual person. But as MacFarlane and Khong emphasize in their study, ambiguities remain about what exactly is being secured.

In July 2000, the Security Council called upon ECOSOC to take a more active role in preventing the structural causes of conflict and urged that these efforts be integrated more effectively into development assistance strategies. In response, Secretary-General Annan in his 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* reiterated his commitment to moving the UN from a "culture of reaction to a culture of prevention" and emphasized the importance of dealing with the structural causes of conflict, including economic factors, arguing that structural conflict prevention is in essence sustainable development. His recommendations included the need to address the socioeconomic

root causes of armed conflicts and the need for UN development cooperation to focus on decreasing structural risk factors that fuel violent conflict such as inequity, inequality, and insecurity.

Broad or Narrow?

MacFarlane and Khong argue for a narrow conception of human security that retains human beings as the center but confines what constitutes security threats to conscious threats against physical integrity that are planned and perpetrated by states, individuals, or groups that aim to do harm to people. This perspective enables human security to establish links with mainstream security discourse.

Does a broader approach to human security involve more than merely renaming other problems as issues of human security? The High-level Panel's 2004 report *A More Secure World* argued that it does: "Development and security are inextricably linked. A more secure world is only possible if poor countries are given the chance to develop. Extreme poverty and infectious diseases threaten many people directly, but they also provide a fertile breeding ground for other threats, including civil conflict. Even people in rich countries will be more secure if their Governments help poor countries to defeat poverty and disease by meeting the Millennium Development Goals."

In Larger Freedom also adopted the broader approach. It recognized the interrelated actions required to deal with these multiple causes, prevent them from arising, and control them when they do. This will require broader approaches when making budgetary allocations and the need for considering trade-offs: how much is being spent on military approaches to security compared to spending on non-military actions, such as police expenditures to control urban crime or public health measures to control disease. The case for taking account of such broader interactions and consequences seems overwhelming. But the specifics and trade-offs of meeting human security goals need to be analyzed in specific terms, especially at country level.

Coping with terrorism raises similar issues, though more sharply in the present global context. The causes are indeed complex, diverse,

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and difficult to analyze, as are the responses required to control and diminish the risks, both nationally and internationally. Some interpretations are contradictory. Indeed, many close to the UN and elsewhere have argued that military approaches can be counterproductive and should give way to broader non-military solutions.

> In 1900, there was no significant qualification of the sovereignty of states as it related to their own citizens. Now there is. In 1900, there was no consensus about the legitimacy of acceptability of intervention in the affairs of other states when they systematically persecuted their own citizens. There is now evidence that such a consensus may be emerging. There was no international interest in the rights of women or children and how these were affected by conflict. Now there is. There was no question that the recruitment of children to fight in wars was acceptable. Now it is not. There was little significant effort to limit weapons that were particularly destructive of civilian life. Now there is. There was no significant consideration of issues other than military matters as significant aspects of security. Now there is. We may be a long way from utopia, but we are also a long way away from the unchallenged dominance of the state as the principal referent of security (MacFarlane and Khong, 269-70).

Conclusion

Without doubt, the UN has a mixed record of responding to security crises and challenges. But in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping, the record shows that the United Nations has numerous positive achievements to its credit. It is true that the Charter is constructed so that interventions for peace and security occur only when the dominant powers want to see action—and inaction occurs when they do not.

However, in many areas of human security, centralized decision making is not required. There is no need to take all issues to the Security Council, where veto power and national interest are inevitably on display. Decision

making outside of the council and the General Assembly is often better and less contentious than within it, and many different organizations of the UN, especially those with representatives and programs at country level, can provide practical support for such action.

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