The role of the United Nations

in conflict resolution and peacekeeping

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The end of the 1980s witnessed the negotiated settlement of some major regional conflicts which had plagued the Third World throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[1] The Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan. The Iran-Iraq war, which had persisted for the better part of a decade with enormous loss of life to both countries, ground to a halt. A peace agreement was hammered out between Cuban, Angolan and South African representatives under United States mediation to end 13-year old war between South Africa and Angola and allowing for Namibia's independence. Sino-Soviet efforts to normalize relations from Cambodia. The countries of Central America agreed to a peace plan proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez calling for a cease-fire, a halt to foreign aid to insurgents, a commitment to national reconciliation, and free and democratic elections.

Many see a direct linkage between the settlement of these regional disputes and the new detente in superpower relations coupled with the rise of a new leadership in the Soviet Union. There is certainly strong circumstantial evidence to support this view. However, it is also true that these conflicts could not have been resolved, or progress achieved in negotiations aimed at dispute settlement, without the active and direct involvement of the United Nations. Once again, the international community seems to be rediscovering the value of the UN in conflict resolution and dispute settlement. Or, in the words of former UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Sir Brian Urquhart, «the UN is improvising its way back towards a position of influence».

This paper addresses four questions. First, where has the UN been involved in peace-making and what has been the nature of this involvement? Second, what accounts for or

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[1] As an illustration for this article, the editors have reproduced the cover of *Peace & Security*. Autumn 1987, Volume 3, Number 3.

explains this recent round of activity by the UN in the settlement of regional disputes? Third, what role can (or should) the UN play in the future settlement of regional disputes? Fourth, how might the UN's role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping be strengthened or expanded?

Recent UN involvement in peace-making

The means and methods of UN involvement in regional conflict have taken a number of different forms: public appeals in the form of UN resolutions asking parties to stop armed hostilities, to restore the *status quo ante,* to start negotiations, or to use the good offices of the Secretary-General or other representative of the Secretariat; provision of channels of communication between adversaries (formal and informal); provision of mediation services, good offices, and other forms of intermediary assistance; provision of fact-finding and observation commissions; provision of peacekeeping forces; and the provision of humanitarian aid and assistance.[2]

The UN has been involved in all of these ways in a number of recent major regional conflicts where the belligerents have sought to find a negotiated solution to their differences.[3]

Iran-Iraq war. In the summer of 1988 Iran accepted UN Resolution 598 as the basis for talks with Iraq to end the Iran-Iraq war. The provisions in the Resolution include a UN-supervised cease-fire, withdrawal of forces to internationally recognized boundaries, prisoner exchanges, the establishment of a panel to determine responsibility for the war, and the negotiation of a comprehensive settlement. The cease-fire formally commenced on August 20, 1988, and both parties agreed to send their representatives to Geneva for negotiations under UN auspices. The UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG) was established by the Security Council, providing for a force of 350 observers from 24 countries to monitor the cease-fire.

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[2] See Kjell Skelsbaek, «Peaceful Settlement of Disputes by the United Nations and Other Intergovernmental Bodies», *Cooperation and Conflict:* Nordic *Journal of International Politics.* Vol. 21, n.º 3 (September 1986), pp. 139-54.

[3] The following review is drawn from Fen Osler Hampson, «A Post-Modernist World: The Changing International Politico-Security System,» in Brian W. Tomlin and Maureen Appel Molot, eds., *Canada Among Nations: The Tory Record/1988* (Toronto: James Lorimer), pp. 52-56; and Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, *The Guide to Canadian Policies on Arms*, International Peace and Security, *The Guide to Canadian Policies on Arms Control, Disarmament, Defence and Conflict Resolution* (Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, October 1989). pp. 161-216. For various historical accounts of the UN's role in peacekeeping, see Department of Public information, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1985); Indar Jit Rikhye, *The Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping* (London: C. Hurst for the International Peace Academy, 1984); and Henry Wisemen, ed., *Peacekeeping: Appraisals and Prospects* (New York: Pergamon, 1985).

There have been several rounds of talks. None as yet has seen significant progress in implementing Resolution 598. Outstanding difficulties include the failure of Iran and Iraq to establish a joint cease-fire monitoring group, continuing differences over navigation rights in the Shatt al' Arab waterway, unresolved boundary disputes, and unresolved differences over exchange plans for prisoners of war.

Afghanistan. In April1988, agreement was reached by Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the Soviet Union and the United States as guarantors, for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan under a UN observer mission. Immediately after the accords went into affect, the United Nations Good Offices Mission for Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) was sent to the region to begin monitoring the Soviet withdrawal. Coordination of economic and humanitarian assistance programs was also initiated on behalf of the UN Secretary-General by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in May 1988. On February 15, 1989, the last Soviet forces left Afghanistan.

Angola-Namibia-South Africa. A peace agreement was concluded in Geneva in November 1988 between representatives of Angola, Cuba, and South Africa under US mediation, calling for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 and leading to full independence for Namibia by April 1990. (Resolution 435 calls for a ceasefire, a UN-peacekeeping force, and UN-sponsored elections in Namibia). In February 1989 the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a United Nations transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) composed of nearly 5,000 peacekeeping troops and police officers and 1000 civilian election monitors. To oversee Cuban troop withdrawals, a 70-member UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVIM) was established in December 1988 by the Security Council.

Western Sahara o The conflict in the Western Sahara between the Kingdom of Morocco against the *Frente Popular para la Liberacion de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio do Oro* (Polisario) has been an ongoing one for some 13 years. In 1988, however, a UN-brokered peace plan calling for a cease-fire and referendum on self-determination of the Western Sahara was accepted in principle by Morocco and the Polisario Front. In September 1988 the Security Council voted for the appointment of a UN Special Representative for Western Sahara to oversee the implementation of the peace process. The post was assumed by Hector Gros Espiell of Uruguay who began his mission earlier this year.

Cyprus. The UN has maintained peace-keeping forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for many years. In 1988 UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar launched a peace initiative that

secured the agreement in August 1988 of Greece and Turkey to hold new talks on unifying the island. After an initial round, talks were temporarily suspended with a commitment to resume in the future.

Central America. UN peace-keeping and observer forces will also play a role in the Central American peace process. The Central American Peace Plan proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez, signed on August 7, 1987, by the presidents of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, calls for a national reconciliation with opponents, a cease-fire within existing constitutional frameworks, democratization in each country, efforts to halt aid to insurgents, a commitment to provide no assistance to groups aimed at destabilizing other governments, and free and democratic elections. After several fitfull starts, the Arias Plan was «reactivated» by the five countries in February 1989. The same month the five also requested from the Secretary-General that a team of unarmed military observers from Canada, Spain. and West Germany, as well as from an unnamed Latin American country, be sent to Central America to verify that none of the countries involved in the peace process supports any subversive activities in neighboring countries, to report on cross-border guerrilla movements, and to observe the 1990 Nicaraguan elections. A UN fact-finding mission to assess peacekeeping requirements has just reported to the Secretary-General. Following approval by the Security Council and General Assembly, a UN peacekeeping and observer force (ONUCA) will be deployed in the region. The UN has also been active in the refugee issue, sponsoring a conference on Central American refugees in April 1989 in Guatemala City.

Indochina. The United Nations has presented a variety of proposals that could provide the basis for a comprehensive settlement in the conflict in Cambodia. The withdrawal of Vietnamese occupying .forces has helped ease tensions although the major parties to the conflict, the Soviet-funded, Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) led by Prime Minister Hun San, and the Coalition Government of Democratia Kampuchea (CGDK) under the titular leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, continue to remain at loggerheads, in April 1989, Vietnam formally asked Canada, Poland, and India to form a monitoring commission to verify the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia scheduled to end in September 1989. Canadian conditions for participation are a Vietnamese agreement for withdrawal, UN Security Council endorsement of the plan, a clear peacekeeping mandate with a set lifespan, proper funding, and evidence that this would be part of a comprehensive solution to the Cambodean problem. In July 1989, the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) foreign ministers meeting in Brunei

declared that a UN-monitored Vietnamese troop withdrawal, and subsequent eclections, would have to be part of a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia.

The recent UN role in the settlement of regional disputes

What accounts for this apparent progress in the resolution of several major regional conflicts? A key factor, and one witch also explains the growing trend towards multilateralism, is the new detente in superpower relations. By bringing pressure to bear on client states who are belligerents the Superpowers have facilitated conflict settlement and resolution processes.

Current improvements in East-West relations have clearly helped bring about the tentative settlement of several major regional conflicts including the Iran-Iraq war, Angola-Namibia, the Western Sahara, Afghanistan, and Cambodia.[4] (In the latter case, the new Sino-Soviet rapprochement and Gorbachev's July 1986 Vladivostok speech marked the beginning of a redefinition in attitudes among the three members of the Sino-Soviet-Vietnam triangle, and it is unlikely that Vietnam's phased withdrawal of its troops from Cambodia would have occurred without strong pressure from the Soviet Union.)

The Soviet Union under Gorbachev has also committed itself to international cooperation and multilateral institutions. It has indicated it wants to reinvigorate the UN by making better use of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice, and other UN bodies to resolve international disputes.[5]

But improved superpower relations are obviously not the only factor which explains these trends. War weariness also accounts for the desire of belligerents to terminate hostilities. This is what some observers call the «ripeness» phase of dispute settlement: the prospects for a negotiated settlement to a conflict are greater when war weariness has set in among the parties and a conflict has reached a plateau or «hurting stalemate» in which unilateral advantage is no longer possible.[6] In the Iran-Iraq war eight years of conflict had clearly

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[4] For a useful discussion of these developments see William Gutteridge, «The Case For Regional Security: Avoiding Conflict in the 1990s», *Conflict Studies,* N.º 217 (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Security and Conflict Studies, 1989), pp. 1-12.

[5] See, for example, Vladimir Petrovsky, «From crisis to preventive diplomacy in the United Nations,» paper delivered at the Conference on the *Reduction of the Risk of Nuclear War through Multilateral Means,* Kingston, Ontario, October 7-8, 1988; and Vladimir Petrovsky, «Towards the 21st Century: The Future for Multilateral Diplomacy», in *The Role of the United Nations in Conflict Resolution. Peace-Keeping and Global Security: Report of the Annual Conference of the Department of Public information for Non-Governmental Organizations* (New York: United Nations. September, 1988). pp. 30-32.

[6] See Richard N. Haass, «Ripeness and the settlement of international disputes,» *Survival,* Vol. 30, N.º. 3 (May/June 1988). pp. 232-51; I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and I. William Zartman and Maureen R. Berman, *The Practical Negotiator* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1985);

taken their toll on the economies of both sides and in human lives and suffering. In the Central American conflict war weariness in the region's population, as well as the dynamic leadership exercised by President Arias, helped generate momentum for the nascent peace process. In Angola-Namibia the conflict had reached a stalemate and there was strong interest on the part of all parties to end a lengthy guerrilla war that had grown too costly. Vietnam's continuing occupation of Cambodia likewise had become extremely costly and was proving major drain on Vietnam's economy, although this factor alone was not sufficient to bring about a troop withdrawal and a resolution to the conflict.

In some regions the prospects for peace have been affected not so much by improved US-Soviet relations as by domestic developments. A new US administration and a new bipartisan consensus between the administration and Congress - based on the recognition that past US policies to the region were a failure - have had a positive impact on the prospects for peace in Central America. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from several Third World regional conflicts is also linked to Gorbachev's domestic economic reforms and his desire to reduce the drain of military spending on the Soviet economy.

UN peacekeeping and mediation efforts in these conflicts have been affected by this confluence of crosscutting trends and events. UN involvement also could not have occurred without high levels of international cooperation more generally, including the concurrence of the parties to the dispute, the support of the five permanent members of the Security Council (and concurrence of at least four non-permanent members), and the willingness of countries to make troops available for peacekeeping and observer missions.

At the same time, the UN has some special attributes which are conducive to international peace-making. First, in international mediation the Office of the UN Secretary-General can be objective and independent, more so than the great powers. Second, governments who are prepared to negotiate but are afraid of losing face or appearing weak can use the UN machinery as a channel for communication because they will be seen as cooperating with · world opinion. Third, neutrality or impartiality is critical to the UN's record in peacekeeping: the Blue Helmets «have no enemies, are not dispatched to achieve victory, and can use force only in self-defence.»[7] Finally, the UN has to some extent become the

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and Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, eds., *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 251-68.

[7] H.E. Javier Perez de Cuellar, Secretary-General, United Nations, «Keynote Address, in *The Role of the United Nations* in *Conflict Resolution. Peacekeeping and Global Security,* p. 8.

victim of its own recent success which has generated new calls for the use of its «good offices» in dispute settlement.[8]

The UN's future role in regional conflict

Many see a growing role for the UN in the settlement of regional disputes. Indeed, some would like to see the UN's role expand even further to the prevention of regional conflicts. They foresee exciting new possibilities for multilateralism in the «new thinking» of Mikhail Gorbachev and recent Soviet proposals for UN reform. A wealth of proposals have been offered not just by the Soviets to strengthen and improve the UN's role in international mediation and peacekeeping. These include more comprehensive and regular procedures for monitoring the world security situation, earlier treatment of disputes and questions of peace and security, a wider and more regular use of regional organizations as part of the overall international system for peacekeeping and peace-making, firmer links between conflict control and the negotiation and settlement of disputes, more positive support for UN peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts, more systematic ear-marking of material and logistical support for peacekeeping, standardization of equipment, creation of naval peacekeeping forces, creation of a formal military peacekeeping force, and the establishment of a UN multilateral war risk reduction center.[9] These measures (some of which are discussed at greater length below) suggest ways to bolster and strengthen the role

[8] The recent record of success by the UN in international mediation and peacekeeping compares favorably with its overall record which has been a mixed one and marked by a general decline in the number of successful referrals over the past three decades. See Ernst B. Haas, «The Collective Management of International Conflict, 1945-1984», in United Nations Institute for Training and Research, *The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Peace and Security* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 3-72. For a useful discussion of the UN's interaction with the changing international environment, see Raimo Vayrynen, «The United Nations and the Resolution of International Conflicts», *Cooperation and Conflict: Nordic Journal of International politics,* Vol. 20, N.º 3 (September 1985), pp. 141-7l.

[9] See, for example, Maurice Bertrand, «Can the United Nations be Reformed?» in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury, *United Nations. Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 193-208; Maurice Bertrand, «The Process of Change in an Interdependent World and Possible Institutional Consequences», John P. Renninger, «What Structural Changes Are Needed in the System of International Institutions», A.V. Shustov, «Problems of Improving United Nations Work», and James Sutterlin, «Strengthening the Role of International Organizations in Dealing with Regional Conflicts», papers delivered at the UNITAR/USSR Association for the United Nations Roundtable on the *Future of the United Nations in an Interdependent World,* Moscow, U.S.S.R., September 5-9, 1988: Brian Urquhart, «The role of the United Nations in maintaining and improving international security», *Survival,* Vo. 28, N.º 5 (September/October 1986), pp. 387-98; Tapio Kanninen, «Towards effective war risk-reduction within the United Nations framework». paper delivered at the Conference on the *Reduction of the Risk of Nuclear War through Multilateral Means,* Kingston, Ontario, October 78, 1988; Diego Cordovez, «Strengthening United Nations Diplomacy for Peace: The Role of the Secretary-General», Nabil Elaraby, «The Office of the Secretary-General and the Maintenance of International Peace and Security», Mircea Malitza, «the Improvement of Effectiveness of United Nations», and Brian Urquhart, «United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and How Their Role Might Be Enhanced», in *The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Peace and Security,* pp. 161-76, 177-212, 237-52, and 253-62; Richard S. Williamson, «Towards the 21st Century: The Future for Multilateral Diplomacy», *Department of State Bulletin.* Vol. 88, N.º 2141 (December 1988), pp. 53-56. On the possible role of the UN in naval peacekeeping operations see S. Shaw, «Naval Peacekeeping as a UN Option for the Gulf». *Naval Forces,* Vol. 9, N.º 1 (1988), pp. 8-9; Cyrus Vance and Elliot L. Richardson, «Let the UN Reflag Gulf Vessels», *The New York Times,* July 8, 1987; and Cyrus Vance and Elliot L. Richardson, «Put the UN into the Persian Gulf», *The New York Times,* October 20, 1987.

of the UN in international mediation and peacekeeping while, at the same time, opening further avenues to security cooperation and conflict in Third World regional conflicts.

But enthusiasm should be tempered with several cautionary notes about the possibilities of widening the UN's role in regional conflict management and resolution. First, we have to recognize that the current dialogue and cooperation between the superpowers on regional conflict does not necessarily imply that they will want to use the UN to prevent or resolve all regional conflicts in the future. Absent such cooperation, the UN's hands are tied. Second, even if the superpower rekindled interest in the UN continues to flourish, UN involvement in dispute settlement also depends upon the willingness and desire of belligerents in regional conflict to use its good offices. If disputants are skeptical about the UN's impartiality, or worry about undue influence exercised by the great powers in the Security Council, this will limit or thwart the UN's role in the peace process.

Third, there is a fundamental problem that the organization faces which concerns the dilemmas of international mediation and peacekeeping in conflicts where the line between interstate or regional and domestic or communal violence is blurred. Most states refuse to allow outside intervention in their own internal affairs and the concept of state sovereignty and non-intervention is enshrined in international law. Under its Charter, the United Nations is only supposed to deal with interstate conflicts. Many Third World conflicts, however, are rooted in intrastate tensions such as ethnicity, communal strife, socio-economic problems, etc.[10] It has become increasingly difficult to police conflicts at the interstate level without getting involved in domestic disputes. This poses a major dilemma for the peaceful resolution of disputes generally, and the UN's role in international mediation and peacekeeping, in particular. If regional conflicts are immersed in intrastate conflicts and disputes, this will frustrate peacekeeping efforts directed at establishing stability at the regional level. Regional confidence-building efforts will be more likely to break down if intrastate conflicts cannot be contained within national borders and threaten the domestic political stability of the parties concerned. Peacekeeping forces may also find themselves in the direct line of fire in conflicts where the line between interstate and intrastate violence and military confrontation is murky, and countries which are being

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[10] See Barry Buzan, «People, States and Fear: The National Security Problems in the Third World», in Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon. eds., *National Security in the Third World: The Management of External and Internal Threats* (Aldershot, England: Edward Elgar, 1988), pp. 14-43; Edward E. Azar, «Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions», in Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton, eds., *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986), pp. 33-34; and Kumar Rupesinghe, «Theories of Conflict Resolution and Their Applicability to Protracted Ethnic Conflicts», *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*. Vo. 18, N.° 4 (1987), pp. 527-39. For an excellent analysis of the historical processes underlying this trend, see Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-society Relations in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

asked to contribute peacekeeping forces may choose not to do so because the operation is too risky.

This problem is all too evident in the UN's imminent peacekeeping and observer role in Central America. The Esquipulas II accords call for domestic reforms and the ending of civil wars along with the termination of interstate hostilities. The UN is being asked to provide peacekeeping and observer forces in a conflict where none of the domestic warring factions are parties to the accords. In addition, for the first time the UN will be monitoring elections in a country, Nicaragua, which is an independent state. The challenge is an even greater one in Cambodia where the appropriate political, military, and material conditions for a successful UN intervention do not exist right now. The UN's controversial and bloodied record in the Congo in 1960-64 (where ONU found itself caught in a civil war and had to use force to prevent the secession of the province of Katanga) and its ambiguous mandate in Lebanon are stark reminders of the dangers of peacekeeping in confrontations where the domestic/interstate boundary is blurred. Edward Luck and Peter Promuth underscore the hazards of UN intervention in civil confrontations.

In a civil war the job is far messier. If a country is to avoid partition, territorial settlement won't suffice. Instead, a governable national fabric has to be rewoven from a tangle of political, ideological, ethnic, tribal, religious and other threads. The peacemaker becomes a surrogate state-builder, monitoring elections, resettling refugees and rebuilding the economy, bureaucracy and infrastructure.[11]

Fourth, there are obvious tradeoffs between certain kinds of conflict management, like peacekeeping, and conflict settlement or resolution. The interposition of peacekeeping forces in certain conflicts may in fact «freeze» the possibilities for settlement by moving these conflicts to a «stable» equilibrium from which it is difficult to budge the parties to the dispute. Short-term «management» of a conflict will inevitably have an impact on its possibilities for long-term settlement and resolution. Importantly, many of these consequences will be unintended or unanticipated. For example, UN forces have kept the peace in Cyprus for almost 25 years but no resolution of the conflict is in sight because the parties cannot agree to a negotiated settlement. Peacekeeping and other forms of confidence-building are no substitute for conflict settlement and resolution and it is obviously important not to lose sight of these longer-term objectives when addressing the

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[11] Edward Luck and Peter Fromuth, «UN faces risky role in Cambodia», *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 26, 1989.

immediate problem of implementing cease-fires and ending military hostilities.[12] At the same time, however, we have to ask whether the alternatives are any better. The best should not be allowed to become the enemy of the good.

Finally, in focusing on the role of the UN in regional conflict we should not overlook the potential contribution of regional or sub-regional cooperative efforts in the peace-making, peacekeeping, and peace-building process. Leslie Brown argues that small regional groupings, like the Contadora Group, the Central American peace plan group, and ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), are especially well suited to address the resolution of specific regional security problems. The reasons include small size, the narrow focus and agreement among the members that they have a common problem requiring a common solution, their mutual concern about the threat of superpower involvement and escalation (and obvious desire to limit such involvement), their geographical proximity (and perhaps common language, religion, or cultural heritage), and their methods of operation (which tend to be informal and unbureaucratic by comparison with larger regional or international organizations).[13]

Although these groupings may be better suited for mediation and peaceful intervention in regional conflicts than international entities like the UN, collaborative regional attempts at conflict resolution can be complemented by formal technical assistance from the UN to monitor verification and compliance with negotiated agreements. For example, in both Central America and Indochina, parties are looking to the UN and other third-parties for their involvement not just in verification and observer activities but also, more generally, for assistance in refugee settlement, economic support, and diplomacy. The two approaches to peace-making - the regional or subregional and the international - are thus not mutually exclusive.

Strengthening UN Machinery

Proposals to strengthen the role of the UN in international peacemaking and peace-building must first begin with a clear appraisal of the changing nature of international

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[12] For a critical discussion of peacekeeping see Paul F. Diehl, «When Peacekeeping Does not Lead to Peace: Some Note on Conflict Resolution», *Bulletin of Peace Proposals,* Vol. 18, N.º 1 (March 1987), pp. 47-53. For a review of different national positions on the operational aspects of peacekeeping see Report of the Secretary-General, *Special Committee* on *Peacekeeping Operations: Comprehensive Review of the Whole Question of Peacekeeping Operations* in *All Their Aspects, A/AC.121/36* and *Addendum A/AC.121/36/*Add.l, United Nations General Assembly, March 21, 1989 and April 2, 1989.

[13] Leslie H. Brown, «Regional collaboration in resolving third-world conflicts», *Survival,* Vol. 28, N.º 3 (May/June 1986), pp. 208-20.

conflict. As alluded to above, intrastate violence has replaced interstate warfare as the major form of «international» conflict. Civil wars are now the major form of warfare and of the 127 wars since the Second World War all but two (in Hungary and in the Soviet border-area with China) have been fought in developing countries.[14]

The roots of these conflicts often lie in ethnic or religious tensions which, in turn, have been fueled by social and economic grievances. The importance of resolving the social, economic, and cultural causes of these conflicts is thus essential to conflict *prevention* in international affairs. Article 2 of the UN Charter states that «nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require Members to submit such matters to settlement under the Charter: but his principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measure under Chapter VII». However, as James Sutterlin notes, it should not be concluded that the UN has no role to play in alleviating the domestic roots of violence. The UN has played an important role in coordinating international emergency relief efforts in regions such as Africa (1985-86) and addressing human rights violations (another cause of conflict) through quasi-mediatory means. As Sutterlin writes, «The Charter of the United Nations recognizes that international cooperation in resolving social, economic, cultural and humanitarian problems is an essential element in maintaining peace. There is need for this mandate to be exercised more purposefully to lessen causes of societal conflict.»[15] Proposals to strengthen the UN's capacity in this area include transforming the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) into a Council of Ministers that would maintain a «global watch» system to monitor economic and social areas and improve the coordination of international relief efforts.

The mediation capabilities of the Office of the Secretary General could also be used more effectively than they are now for crisis prevention and to defuse hostilities before they escalate to armed conflict. However, this depends upon timely information, leverage, mediation capabilities, and also the ability to impose sanctions, if necessary, to deter the likelihood of war.[16]

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[14] War deaths have also been heavily weighted toward Asia and the Far East (Asia accounts for 55 percent of the world's population but about 70 percent of war deaths). Civilian death tolls are also rising: from about 50 percent of the war dead in the 1950s to about 75 percent in the 1980s. See Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditure 1987-1988*,12th edn. (Washington, D.C.: World Priorities, 1988), pp. 22-28; and Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and social Expenditures 1989*, 13th edn. (Washington, D.C. World Priorities, 1989), p.23.

[15] Sutterlin, «Strengthening the Role of international Organizations in Dealing with Regional Conflicts», p. 2.

[16] The discussion here and of the proposals that drawn from ibid., pp. 2-7.

The Secretary General of the US has been actively involved in mediation in a wide range of conflicts: Afghanistan, the Falklands, Iran-Iraq, Cyprus, the Western Sahara and elsewhere. However, his efforts have occasionally been frustrated by a lack of proper and timely information and his dependence upon national governments, the media, and other institutional sources for information. The creation within the Secretary General's Office of an Office for Research and the Collection of Information (OCRI) is intended to improve data collection and interpretation and to help the Secretary General better anticipate regional and international developments.

But information is not the only requirement for crisis prevention. Issues have to be brought to the attention of the Security Council so that appropriate responses can be developed early in a crisis rather than later. To the extent Council members see a common interest in avoiding conflict, it is important that they exercise collective influence in the early stages of conflict. The UN's role might also be enhanced by greater use of *positive and negative inducements* in regional conflict situations. The threatened or actual use of sanctions (such as the threat of an arms embargo in the Iran-Iraq war) can sometimes help bring about movement toward negotiations. An intriguing suggestion, first proposed by the Palme Commission, is the use of *peacekeeping forces as a deterrent to conflict.* In the case of border tensions if one party requests the deployment of UN forces on its side, after appropriate consideration of the request, a peacekeeping force would be deployed on that state's territory. Such forces would serve as a «deterrent» against military aggression because both parties would then run the risk of firing at a «neutral» third party. The presence of an impartial peacekeeping force on the ground would also help increase transparency and deal with border violations. In instances where the threat of military aggression lies at sea (like the Falklands) rather than on the ground, the use of *maritime peacekeeping forces* should also be considered.

The development of an effective crisis-prevention mediation, peacekeeping, and «deterrent» capability in the UN will require planning and effective coordination - more so than now exists within the organization. Some suggest that the ORCI and the global watch staff should form a kind of «war risk-reduction center» and that these institutional reforms should be complemented by confidential consultations in the Security Council to discuss specific means and measures for maintaining peace.[17]

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[17] Ibid., pp. 10.

It has been suggested here that the changing global situation and recent negotiated settlement of several major · regional conflicts in creating new opportunities for third parties, particularly international organizations like the UN, to play a major role in the peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace-building process. In the Middle East, Central America, Africa, and Asia, the demand for international mediation and peace-keeping, verification, and observer forces in regional conflicts depends upon the nature of the issues under dispute, the timing of the intervention, the qualities and skills of the intervener, and the methods used. Moreover, intrastate and intercommunel conflicts - which increasingly characterize the nature of armed conflict in today's world - will be resistant to the use of traditional international institutional mechanism and approaches to conflict settlement and resolution. The absence of well-defined political, geographical, and cultural boundaries in these conflicts greatly complicates as well as limits the possibilities for successful intervention by external actors like the UN.

Nevertheless, international institutions have proven themselves remarkably adaptable to new conflict situations and changing geopolitical realities. The development of better methods and forms of crisis prevention (as opposed to crisis management) is clearly essential if the UN is to respond effectively to the challenges of regional security. Enhancing the UN's mediation and peacekeeping capabilities will enable it to play an expanded role in the prevention and settlement of regional disputes. But the UN's role will have to be complemented by regional and/or sub-regional efforts, especially in those conflicts where states (and sub-state actors) are wary about or have actively and purposely sought to exc1ude outside parties from the conflict resolution and settlement process. The peace-making and peace-building process in these conflicts will be peacemeal and untidy - what Joseph Nye has called «peace in parties»[18]

The objectives of UN intervention in regional conflict may be narrowly focused or quite broad in orientation depending upon the situation concerned. In some cases, the goal may be to intervene once with a view to stopping hostilities and implementing a cease-fire. Other interventions may be directed at crisis prevention or bringing about an ordely transformation of power, after which the services of the UN will no longer be required. Where the objective is the creation of a series of confidence-building measures, which can only be implemented gradually over a prolonged period of time, the UN will have a strong incentive to entrench and institutionalize its role in the peace process. In this latter

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[18] See Joseph Nye, Jr., *Peace in Paris: Integration and Conflict in Regional Organization* (Boston: Little. Brown, 1971).

instance, the UN require the requisite financial and administrative resources, as well as strong and sustained international support, to remain actively engaged in the peace process. Having said this, there is little doubt that significant opportunities for developing new approaches to the peaceful settlement of disputes are emerging in today's world, along with a renewed role for the UN. In a real sense, the UN is moving «back to the future!»[19]

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[19] See «The United Nations: Back to the Future». *The Ford Foundation Newsletter,* Vol. 20, N.º 1 (February 1989), pp. 1-5.