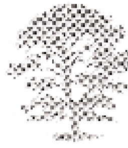

COMMENTARY
Peacekeeping in the Name of Humanity

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When its charter was written in 1945, the United Nations was expected to become a major force for international order and stability [1]. More recently, the world body has appeared to be little more than a debating society, whose myriad negotiations and resolutions have little practical effect. Now the United Nations is again assuming the role for which it was originally intended. The end of the cold war, the implosion of the Soviet Union, and the eruption of ethnic and religious violence in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa have created the need, and growing consensus and cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council have increased the feasibility of that body's taking on a broad spectrum of responsibilities. These include supervising elections, monitoring human rights, good offices and mediation, and humanitarian aid; in short, not only peacekeeping but peacemaking and peace enforcement.

Even those who are encouraged by this widening of roles and interventions recognize that it has risks and costs. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his mid-1992 report to the Security Council, "Agenda for Peace" [2], noted that in the last four years the United Nations had established 13 peacekeeping operations—as many as in all its previous history—requiring the dispatch of 50,000 men to various trouble-spots at a cost in excess of $3 billion. The explosion of claims on U.N. resources has led the Secretary-General to develop a burden-sharing strategy. In the case of Somalia, for example, Boutros-Ghali welcomed the intervention of American troops while recognizing that they would eventually have to be replaced by a multilateral U.N. force. In Bosnia, the Secretary-General has suggested that various of Europe's regional organizations—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Western European Union, the European Economic Community (EEC), and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—seek a mediating role. Should forceful intervention be required, he expects NATO to assume primary responsibility.

THE NEED FOR SELECTIVITY

Policy makers around the world have come to recognize that the end of the cold war has removed a central organizing principle from the international political system. Bipolarity has given way to multipolarity; today, intrastate conflicts threaten international order and stability as the interstate wars have done in the past. "Ethnic cleansing," separatist movements, and religious strife afflict most regions, generating waves of refugees.

The Secretary-General contends that these challenges represent historic opportunities to strengthen the world body. In his words:

> The new era has brought new credibility to the United Nations. Along with it have come rising expectations that the United Nations will take on larger responsibilities and a greater role in over-

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coming pervasive and interrelated obstacles to peace and development. Together the international community and the U.N. Secretariat need to seize this extraordinary opportunity to expand, adapt, and reinvigorate the work of the United Nations so that the lofty goals as originally envisioned by the charter can begin to be realized [3].

Boutros-Ghali does acknowledge that the world organization faces severe difficulties: financial constraints; a shortage of personnel experienced in peacekeeping and humanitarian-assistance field operations; and disagreement among member states, both as to the types of contributions each should make, and as to how, and to what extent, the United Nations mandate for international operations should be expanded. In the words of one international civil servant, "We are at the limit of the Security Council's capacity to oversee and crisis manage, the Secretary-General's ability to lead, the Secretariat's capacity to manage, and the field missions' capacity to cope" [4].

Meanwhile, crises multiply. In Europe, the former Yugoslavia is engaged in savage warfare, while Moldova and the Caucasus are beset by national and ethnic rivalries. In Africa, such countries as Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Liberia threaten to fall out of the community of nations. In Latin America, we are witnessing crises in Haiti, Peru, and Nicaragua. And, Central and South Asia have their own ethnic and religious struggles. In virtually every region, bankrupt nations are in desperate need of economic and humanitarian assistance lest they descend into political chaos or even national disintegration.

Amid abundant disaster, the United Nations has limited resources and must use caution in choosing where to engage them. Since the conclusion of World War II, there have been approximately 200 limited wars, generating casualties of more than 20 million people [5]. (An estimated 85% of them have been intra- rather than interstate, and 95% of those have taken place outside of Europe [5].) The United Nations has sought to play a mediating/peacekeeping role in only a handful of these conflicts, having found that it was only in cases of interstate conflicts where superpower interests were not engaged that its interventions were likely to succeed. Intervention in intrastate conflicts or civil wars has been considered risky, or even counterproductive. Moreover, the norms and prohibitions of international law have served to inhibit such interventions. Today, however, these inhibitions are yielding in the face of massive civilian casualties and gross abuses of human rights. But how far United Nations interventions can go and how successful they can be expected to be are still subjects for discussion in the United Nations and its member states.

HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVES

Late in 1992, a sharp debate erupted in this country and in the halls outside the General Assembly and the offices of the United Nations Secretary-General. Television and other media were presenting shocking reports of war and starvation in Somalia, and of the inability of Pakistani peacekeeping forces to restore order. While thousands died in the violence and chaos [6], the world body appeared immobilized. Finally, on December 8 and 9, President Bush announced that American troops would be introduced to provide safe passage for emergency food and medical supplies and to establish a modicum of order and stability in the central and southern parts of these former Italian and British colonies, "united" in the early 1960s. The U.N. leadership gave its approval to the American intervention.

The international legal community has long disputed the right of nations or international organizations to introduce military force to relieve human suffering, without the express permission of local governments. Strict constructionists have argued that such intervention could only be sanctioned to rescue individuals under conditions where a local government could not or would not provide protection [7]—the 1976 rescue by Israeli forces at Entebbe, Uganda, is often cited as an example of such a situation. Others have sought more inclusive criteria for multilateral military intervention [7], but their efforts foundered on the argument that Article 2, Section 7 of the United Nations Charter protects member states from foreign involvement in their domestic affairs. The Article stipulates the following:

> 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 the members to sumbit such matters to settlement under the present Charter...[8].

The view prevailed until 1991 that "international law granted no general right unilaterally to charge into another country to save its people from their own leaders" [7].

The Gulf war of 1991 weakened this conviction. After its forces were expelled from Kuwait, Baghdad turned its frustration and fury on rebellious Kurdish and Shiite populations in northern and southern Iraq.

More than 2 million Kurds were forced to flee, but found themselves unwelcome in neighboring Turkey and Iran, which were beset by domestic difficulties. The Security Council responded, after extended debate, by adopting Resolution 688, which condemned Baghdad's repression of its civilian population and characterized its actions as a threat to international peace and security in the region. The Council insisted that "Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq and make available all necessary facilities for their operations" [7]. The Secretary-General was directed to use the resources at his disposal to address "urgently the critical needs of the refugees and displaced Iraqi population" [7]. The government of Iraq, condemned for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait by previous Security Council resolutions, was urged to cooperate, as the Council appealed to member states and humanitarian organizations to provide emergency assistance. As anticipated, Baghdad condemned the resolution as blatant intervention in its domestic affairs and as a direct violation of the principle of sovereignty. Baghdad's anger was fueled by the fact that it was already facing an erosion of sovereignty reflected in U.N. demands that Baghdad destroy its unconventional weapons, pay reparations for its invasion of Kuwait, and face ecomonic sanctions until there was compliance with all U.N. resolutions.

The intense debate that preceded passage of Resolution 688 shows that it was not the great leap toward international interventionism that some observers have claimed. There was little inclination to authorize, or otherwise validate, efforts by any member state unilaterally to inject its military forces into the refugee zones, or by the U.N. to send in multilateral forces on a coercive basis. All the resolution did was forbid Baghdad to deny entry to humanitarian agencies attempting to aid Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. Even so, the U.S., Britain, and France contended the resolution implicitly authorized deployment of their forces into northern Iraq to protect humanitarian relief efforts and to create a safe haven zone for Kurds to protect them from military incursions by Badhdad. Three members of the Security Council voted against Resolution 688 and two abstained on the grounds that, *inter alia*, human rights violations within a country should be of no concern to the Security Council. The government of India even declared that a massive flow of refugees across international frontiers does not constitute a threat to international peace and security, in spite of having, two decades earlier, used the opposite argument to justify its use of military force against what was then East Pakistan [7].

Whatever the intentions of its authors, Resolution 688 produced an ambiguous situation. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali made clear his support for humanitarian intervention by appointing the distinguished Swedish diplomat Jan Eliasson to the position of Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs—with the informal sobriquet "Mr. Human Rights"—but the debate about intervention continues. Many members fear that the Security Council is encroaching on the domain of the General Assembly, and there, state sovereignty is sacrosanct. Recently, the Security Council conducted a heated debate on whether it or the General Assembly possessed the authority to dispatch nonuniformed policemen to Haiti to monitor the work of Haitian military personnel during the 1991 elections. After considerable disagreement and delay, a compromise was reached and the operation was sponsored jointly.

As noted in a recent commentary [9], the most vigorous advocate of humanitarian intervention has been Bernard Kouchner, until recently France's Minister of Humanitarian Action, who has urged unfettered access to the victims of natural and man-made disasters. A founder of *Medecins sans Frontiers*, he has called for a "law of democratic intervention," which would establish international norms to sanction the protection of people "before it became too late to save them." His recommendation has been ill received by most member states, including the United States, for reasons that need to be carefully assessed: for the instinct for humanitarian intervention, while fortifying moral impulses, frequently shrinks from the devil of pragmatic application.

BOSNIA-SOMALIA: LESSONS LEARNED?

At present, the several agencies within the United Nations that are responsible for peacekeeping and humanitarian aid are straining to meet the demands placed on them. Traditional precepts for organizing and introducing U.N.-authorized forces into hazardous field operations are being reconsidered. Hitherto, basic guidelines have required 1) consent by parties involved in armed conflict to a cease-fire and to the introduction of U.N-sponsored forces to monitor its implementation, 2) a clear and attainable mandate for the U.N. forces from the Security Council, 3) minimum use of force under strictly enforced rules of engagement, and 4) collective and sustained financing

by the membership. Another condition in traditional peacekeeping has been that international forces must be removed on formal request by either one or all of the parties to the dispute [10]. Traditional peacekeeping operations, today in Cyprus, the Golan Heights, and in Central America, have proved successful in ending armed conduct, thus permitting adversaries opportunites to settle disputes peacefully.

By contrast the forcible introduction of military forces, either to ensure a cease-fire or for humanitarian purposes, brings with it basic changes in assumptions and procedures. Rather than being lightly armed and essentially passive, intervention forces must be more heavily armed, judgmental in approach, and thus prepared to suffer casualties if they vigorously pursue mandated objectives. The killing of 23 Pakistani peacemakers in Mogadishu on June 5, 1993, testifies to the dangers arising from such operations. Member states that have hitherto been willing to make their forces available for traditional peacekeeping missions have reservations about using them in forcible interventions, as well as about the accompanying financial burdens.

Four questions need to be addressed if future interventions are to be effective:

- How, and to what extent, can the various United Nations agencies responsible for military and humanitarian aid be effectively coordinated?
- How, and to what extent, can nonpermanent members of the Security Council and other member states participate in creating guidelines for humanitarian intervention?
- Should primary responsibility for overseeing military forces and humanitarian agencies in the field be delegated to the Secretary-General?
- Does the current Secretary-General have the will and determination to introduce needed structural and management reforms within the encrusted Headquarters bureaucracy?

The record of recent U.N. interventions is replete with instances of ineptitude in the field, disagreement between civilian and military authorities, and failures of leadership. In Somalia, United Nations relief personnel were withdrawn shortly after the eruption of interclan warfare, on the grounds that their insurance premiums had risen to unacceptable levels. The private relief agencies that were left in the field found insurance coverage in the form of hired Somali protection-agents. When a small U.N.-sponsored Pakistani military contingent was finally dispatched, it was surrounded and immobilized at the Mogadishu airport until American forces intervened. Somalia remains a test of whether the United Nations has the will and the staying power to stabilize a desperate and chaotic situation.

Bosnia is another test. Here we confront a tangle of imperatives: the right to self-determination, the need to protect minorities, the rules of war, the prohibition against genocide, and the necessity for humanitarian aid for noncombatants. The debate over appropriate strategies and approaches to ending the slaughter has taken innumerable turns, and will likely be studied by historians for years to come. A U.N. decision to intervene early in the conflict might have produced a truce, but from where would the intervention force have been recruited? In the absence of a United Nations rapid deployment force, Boutros-Ghali could only negotiate for a cease-fire and the admission of humanitarian aid supplies and personnel. Faced with the intransigence of Serbian forces, the U.N. refugee relief agency found itself compelled to facilitate "ethnic cleansing" by assisting in the transfer of civilians from cities and villages under Serbian siege. Since the U.N. force in Bosnia was limited to assisting in the distribution of emergency aid through peaceful means, it could not force entry into besieged Muslim towns or otherwise protect defenseless civilian populations.

LESSONS LEARNED

The need for humanitarian assistance will continue to arise in many forms and guises during the remainder of this decade. Natural disasters, as have occurred in Bangladesh, the Philippines, and elsewhere, will warrant U.S. bilateral and multilateral emergency responses. American and other military and civilian agencies are well-organized and experienced in dealing with the initial rescue and recovery stages of such situations. An international support system is also in place to provide needs assessment and epidemiology; the system undoubtedly requires reinforcement, but the network of agencies and institutions prepared to act in concert is impressive.

The U.N. has the potential to accomplish things that no other international organization can do. It can deal with modern plagues, assist refugees, and cope with natural disasters. But its financial situation is parlous. The U.N. budget for 1992 was $4.1 billion—of which 34% was to be allocated to peacekeeping and 24% for refugees and humanitarian relief. By year's end, peacekeeping alone was claiming $3 billion of the budget, and this year the figure for peacekeeping will

approach $4 billion The U.S is almost $600 million in arrears in its pledge to meet U.N needs.

More disheartening and threatening is the disinclination of many peoples and communities to co-exist in the traditionally delineated enclosure called the nation-state. Their savage wars have presented international institutions with basic challenges relating to the protection of minority rights and of the freedom of people to assert their own national identity. Although we might prefer that these issues be debated and resolved through constructive dialogue, history teaches us that the process will more often be violence-laden and, ultimately, resolved in favor of the groups with the biggest guns.

Where governments have neither the political acumen nor the resources to deal effectively with ethnic and sectarian issues, other Bosnias and Somalias will most certainly evolve. The capacity of the United Nations, regional organizations such as NATO or the EEC, or of the United States to deal with all such conflicts will prove marginal at best. Even a rapid deployment force, were one at the Secretary-General's disposal, could not respond to every crisis at once

A useful step would be the establishment of an international early warning/crisis-prevention center at U.N. Headquarters, one capable of alerting the Secretary-General and the Security Council to looming political and economic problems that might come to require U.N. involvement. Early intervention with economic and humanitarian aid could provide the foundation for dialogue between governments and local adversaries. On occasion, such assistance could be the basis for a broader economic and social "rescue plan," fashioned and implemented with the help of the international community. It would be essential that U.N. member states agree to provide adequate forces to protect, where necessary, whatever humanitarian assistance groups might be dispatched. An undertaking of this kind would require a rewriting of many traditional "rules of the game," but its benefits would justify the effort.

The Clinton administration is trying to assess this country's future role in international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. While it has proposed a separate line item for peacekeeping in the budget of the Department of Defense—$300 million for starters—it has yet to develop a strategy for overcoming the reservations of many in the third world about such interventions. It is widely feared that the major powers will use "humanitarian concerns" as a mask for neo-imperialistic interventionism. If these suspicions are to be laid to rest, the international community will have to hammer out commonly agreed norms and agreements on the conditions for intervention.

The Clinton administration has yet to present a coherent picture delineating its view of the future American role in international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. There has been talk about "aggressive multilateralism" and shared responsibilities with other "wealthy countries." But there has been little clarity out of Washington on the subject, beyond a few rhetorical flourishes. At present, the Clinton administration gives the impression of a desire to downsize its "leadership role" in peacekeeping. This may be a transitory impression, one that will be corrected as the President takes command of foreign policy.

If peacekeeping efforts are to work, reform is needed in both the United States and the United Nations, where an integrated system to coordinate peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations needs to be established. And, as the costs of interventions continue to mount, the Secretary-General must be urged to end mismanagement in the United Nations procurement system, so that needed supplies can be promptly secured and effectively distributed. Unless these remedial steps are taken, the international peacekeeping/humanitarian-assistance debate will be largely sound and fury, most often ending in frustration and recrimination.

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