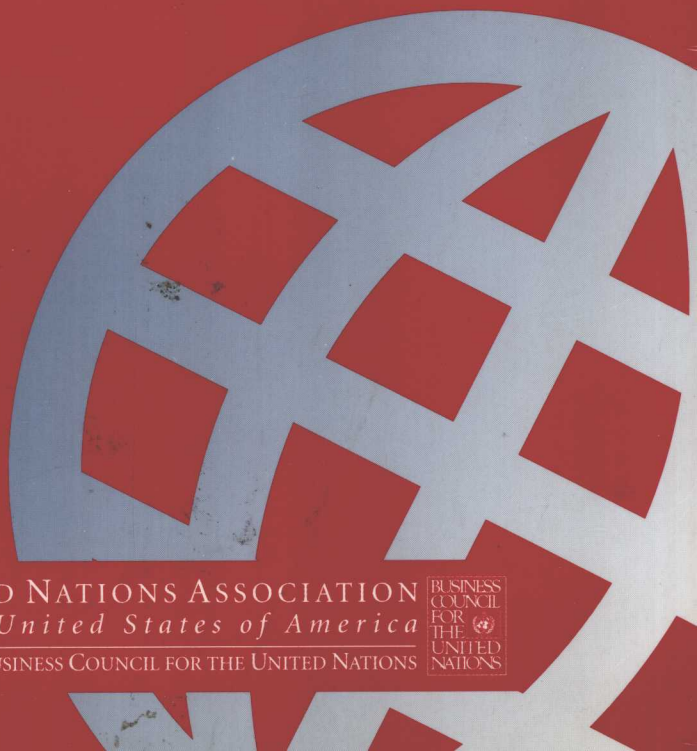


A Global Agenda

1999-2000 Edition

Issues Before the 54th General Assembly of the United Nations



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
of the United States of America
AND THE BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR THE UNITED NATIONS



A GLOBAL AGENDA

Issues Before
the 54th
General Assembly
of the
United Nations

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John Tessitore and Susan Woolson,
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New York, August 1999

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I

Making and Keeping the Peace

1. Peacekeeping in the 21st Century

By Nick Birnback

As the United Nations prepares for the challenges of the next millennium, the Organization finds itself confronted with both a new generation of conflicts and the bloody resurgence of old ones. Almost without exception, every conflict in the post-Cold War era has been intra-state. In the words of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "the new conflicts which have erupted since 1991 have been civil ones. Although, often, there is outside interference, the main battle is between people who are, or were, citizens of the same State" [U.N. press release SG/SM/6901, 2/23/99]. Following the brief euphoric period of "aggressive multilateralism" in the early 1990s (a casualty, for the most part, of the disastrous Somalia operation), the United Nations is now searching for ways to adjust and redefine the increasingly complex and interdisciplinary tasks that confront it.

Disunited Nations

While the need for U.N. intervention has increased, the Security Council's willingness to authorize new peacekeeping missions has not. The collegial atmosphere that had characterized the post-Cold War Security Council appears to be a thing of the past, replaced by frequently fractious statements from Beijing, Moscow, Paris, and Washington/London. At this time of increased global conflict, U.N. peacekeepers are conspicuously absent or their roles have been marginalized [see *Christian Science Monitor*, Opinion Piece, 1/20/99]. An example of the disconnect between rhetoric and action was the failure of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the U.N. Preventive Deployment Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (UNPREDEP). The U.N.'s sole preventive deployment mission, UNPREDEP was referred to by the Secretary-General in his 1998 annual report as "a success, inasmuch as war has so far been avoided. . . ." He noted that "the presence of UNPREDEP has undoubtedly had a positive

effect, helping to diffuse tensions both within the country and in the wider region. This year's crisis in Kosovo underlined the vital role of UNPREDEP in preserving stability." Despite the Secretary-General's strong recommendations that the mission be extended six months beyond its February 28, 1999, expiration, the Chinese delegation vetoed the resolution, claiming that "the already insufficient resources of the United Nations should be used where they were most needed" [U.N. press release SC/6648, 2/23/99].

Peacekeeping-by-Proxy ^{代理}

Given the increasing politics and complexities that appear to be confounding the U.N.'s decision-making process in peace and security matters, powerful member states have increasingly demonstrated their willingness to address emerging crises unilaterally or through strategic coalitions. One consequence of this new political impasse has been the tendency of the Security Council in recent years to "subcontract" peacekeeping operations to regional organizations. The regional approach has been an appealing alternative for Council members unwilling to expend the political and pecuniary resources necessary for high-quality peacekeeping operations. However, reliance on regional organizations to police their own backyards clearly has had mixed results, at best.

In the Balkans, NATO has effectively performed a peacekeeping role in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia—despite the Secretary-General's assertion that "peacekeeping is not, and must not become, an arena of rivalry between the United Nations and NATO." However, other more insolvent and/or politically disunited organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and even the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), have not fared as well. The Secretary-General has acknowledged that "peacekeeping is often best done by people from outside the region who are more easily accepted as truly detached and impartial," and even asserted that the United Nations should not "nurture any illusions that regional or sub-regional bodies will be able to handle these problems on their own, without help from the United Nations" [U.N. press release SG/SM/6901, 2/23/99]. Clearly, regional peacekeeping has its place, but recent history has also shown that it likewise has its limits.

A Tough Year

From the peace and security point of view, the United Nations experienced one of the most trying years in its 54-year history, with even the usually upbeat Security Council describing the "overall global security landscape" as "grim" [U.N. press release SC/6626, 1/12/99]. This was a year that saw

the eruption of the first recent full-scale interstate war in Africa (Eritrea/Ethiopia); expansion of the civil conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to include no fewer than seven sovereign nations; resumption of full-scale war in Angola, despite an enormous U.N. investment in the peace process; continuing internal conflicts in Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Georgia, and Somalia, to name a few; and resumption of nuclear testing by both India and Pakistan.

Despite the Secretary-General's vocal assertions that "the Security Council has a central role when it comes to questions of peace and security around the world and that they must be involved in any decision to use force" [U.N. press release SG/SM/6993, 5/14/99], the international community's response to two major crises—Iraq and Kosovo—completely circumvented the U.N. Security Council. The United States, fearful of a Security Council veto, chose to act unilaterally or in a small coalition. Following the attack on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States launched retaliatory air strikes on alleged terrorist bases in Sudan and Afghanistan without officially bringing the matter before the Council. Likewise, when the United States, along with Britain, chose to launch a major air operation against Iraq, it was done without a Security Council vote. In response to this trend, the Russian representative to the General Assembly's Special Peacekeeping Committee complained that "attempts to bypass the Security Council by resorting to international intrusion . . . contradicted the very basis of the existing system of international relations and could have implications of a global character" [U.N. press release GA/PK/158, 3/24/99].

Despite repeated requests by permanent Council members Russia and China, NATO powers effectively excluded the United Nations from their decision-making process regarding Kosovo. The Secretary-General actively tried to reintegrate the Organization into the security equation, commenting that "We have also discovered that even in Kosovo, to have any chance for real and long term solutions, we need to return to the Security Council . . . [which] would be very important in terms of reaffirming the central rule of the Council and acceptance of rule of law and established precedents and procedures" [U.N. press release SG/SM/6993, 5/14/99].

The news, however, was not all bad. The United Nations enjoyed a number of successes over the past year, including the completion of the mandate for a Police Support Group in the Danube region of Croatia (the follow-on to UNTAES) [S/1998/1004, 10/27/98]; the U.N.-brokered agreements on East Timor; the delivery for trial of the suspects in the Pan Am 103 bombing case; the conviction by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda of the former Rwandan Prime Minister for the crime of genocide; the adoption of a treaty banning the manufacture, stockpiling, and use of anti-personnel landmines; and the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. But on the front pages, the U.N.'s seeming inabil-

ity to convince powerful member states to conduct themselves within established norms of multilateralism overshadowed these encouraging developments. Three U.N. missions—UNPREDEP, UNSCOM (Iraq), and MONUA (Angola)—were closed down prematurely [U.N. press release GA/PK/161, 3/26/99], joining “the growing roster of missions that have failed because of standoffs between bitterly entrenched foes and because United Nations member governments have been unwilling to commit the huge military and economic resources necessary to take charge of developments” [*New York Times*, 1/19/99]. After a year replete with disappointments and setbacks, the Secretary-General conceded that “we must never again send a United Nations force, just for the sake of it, to keep a non-existent peace, or one to which the parties themselves show no sense of commitment” [U.N. press release SG/SM/6901, 2/23/99].

Internally, the United Nations has begun to look at peace and security issues along a more “holistic” continuum of preventive deployment, peacemaking, peace-enforcement, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding [Report of the Secretary General on the Work of the Organization, 1998]. As the Secretary-General put it: “Peacekeeping cannot be treated as a distinct task complete in itself. . . . More than ever, the distinctions between political and military aspects of our work are becoming blurred” [SG/SM/6901]. This shift, promulgated by the Secretary-General in his report on “The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa” [S/1998/318, 4/13/98] as well as his Annual Report on the Work of the Organization [A/53/1] and by the Council in several statements [S/PRST/1998/29, S/PRST/1998/38], affirms that the “efforts to ensure lasting solutions to conflicts require sustained political will and a long-term approach in the decision-making of the United Nations” [S/PRST/1998/38]. Unfortunately, political disagreements among the five permanent Security Council members have dictated that support for this progressive initiative remain largely academic. Ignoring many indications of an impending conflict, the Security Council failed to authorize a preventive deployment to the Eritrea/Ethiopia border. Likewise, despite repeated requests, the Secretary-General has not received funding to create a rapidly deployable peacekeeping mission headquarters.

2. Africa

By Nick Birnback

“No one—not the U.N., not the international community—[can] escape the responsibility for the persistence of African conflicts,” U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan advised the Security Council in the spring of 1998 [“Report to the U.N. Security Council on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa,” 4/98], but the United Nations and the

larger international community waited on the sidelines while the continent of Africa experienced one of the worst years in its post-colonial history. On much of the continent, "insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replace leadership . . . [and] lack of respect for human rights" [ibid.] seemed the rule rather than the exception.

A new civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo drew in no fewer than seven sovereign African nations and resisted all the international community's attempts at mediation. Ethiopia and Eritrea became embroiled in Africa's first *interstate* war in years. Sudan, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Lesotho saw an outbreak or continuation of civil conflict. Somalia remains the only nation on earth without a centralized government. Algeria, despite the U.N.'s dispatch of a high-level human rights mission, led by former Portuguese President Mario Soares, continues to reject any form of Western "interference" in its domestic affairs (an estimated 77,000 people have been killed in that North African country since the authorities cancelled a general election in 1992, 600 of those deaths during the three months January to March 1999 [Reuters, 3/26/99]). Western Sahara's referendum on self-determination remains stalled nearly eight years after the United Nations established a mission to oversee the process. And in Angola, which was enjoying a brief period of relative peace after a decade of international mediation efforts, civil war heated up again and the United Nations packed in its peacekeeping operations.

Although **Africa's regional organizations** did demonstrate an increased willingness to take responsibility for security in their own backyard, the actual results have disappointed the hopes of many. There *were* a number of successes: the Economic Community of West Africa's (ECOWAS) restoration to office of Sierra Leone's democratically elected government and stabilization of the situation in Guinea-Bissau for some months; the South African Development Community's (SADC) intervention to stabilize Lesotho; the U.N.-authorized Inter-African Mission's supervision of the surrendering of arms in the Central African Republic, paving the way for deployment of the U.N.'s own peacekeeping mission; and the continuing political involvement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and others in peace initiatives in East Africa. But the ECOWAS force (acronym ECOMOG) is alleged to have committed widespread human rights abuses; and regional players sometimes pursued the national interest by supporting and "even instigating conflicts in neighboring countries." This, said the U.N. Secretary-General, "must be candidly acknowledged" [New York Times, 4/17/99].

The **rules, standards, and protocols for regional peacekeeping** have yet to be established; and such bodies as the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defense and Security

are not addressing aggressively the long-term threats to peace and stability. There is no underestimating the size and difficulty of this task. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is home to fully two-thirds of the people affected by HIV/AIDS worldwide, and a third of all Africans are not expected to live past the age of 40; millions of Africans live in refugee camps or camps for the internally displaced (7.3 million, according to one recent report [ibid., 5/9/99]); and most of the 2 million or more children killed in armed conflicts over the past decade lost their lives in Africa's wars [Secretary-General's Report on the Work of the Organization, 1998].

Other members of the international community have lent their support to efforts at addressing the internal conflicts and humanitarian emergencies in the Great Lakes, Central and Southern Africa, and both East and West Africa. But that limited assistance usually takes the form of political pressure or humanitarian aid as the globe's major actors continue their retreat from the beleaguered continent—a retreat due in no small measure to raw memories of the U.N.'s telegenic failures in Somalia and Rwanda. The perceived apathy of those actors and their unwillingness to risk financial and political capital in Africa undermine African confidence in the United Nations, completing a vicious circle. The result, said U.N. Secretary-General Annan, is that African leaders have begun “to marginalize the United Nations from further political involvement in the region's affairs” [Secretary-General's report on Africa, 4/98]. In fact, he added, “the credibility of the United Nations in Africa to a great extent depends upon the international community's willingness to act and to explore new means of advancing the objectives of peace and security on the continent” [ibid.].

The Secretary-General's extensive report on “**The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa**” in April 1998 was an attempt to focus world attention on the problems of the African continent. He called for increased support of African regional bodies, for better coordination of peacekeeping operations and related exercises, and for a more effective means of inhibiting the flow of arms into Africa.

The report was unusually frank, the Secretary-General going so far as to assert that “African leaders have failed the peoples of Africa; the international community has failed them; the United Nations has failed them.” It was equally blunt in insisting that “Concrete action must be taken.” The Secretary-General's recommendations did not, however, address the political agendas, institutional paralysis, and inadequate resources plaguing the regional organizations for which the report advocates increased support.

In response to the report, the U.N. Security Council passed four resolutions and issued several presidential statements. The resolutions focused on the regional arms embargo [S/Res/1196, 9/16/98], maintenance of

peace and security in refugee camps and settlements in Africa [S/Res/1208, 11/19/98], the establishment of an early-warning system to deal with emerging crises [S/Res/1197, 9/18/98], and the need for action by African states to stem the illicit flow of arms into the region as well as to curb weapons proliferation within their own borders [S/Res/1209, 11/19/98]. The Presidential State-ments spoke of the need to support African peacekeeping initiatives [S/PRST/1998/28], to settle conflicts peaceably [S/PRST/1998/29], and (this directed at regional organizations that take actions in the field of peace and security) to do so with respect to the U.N. Charter and in accordance with “principles of sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity” [S/PRST/1998/35]. African states and many observers welcomed the increased international attention to these issues, although some expressed disappointment that the U.N.’s “initiatives” were largely rhetorical rather than action-oriented.

U.S. President Bill Clinton made a high-profile visit to Africa in 1998, but the **United States** continued to confine its intervention in the continent’s problems to political pressure, diplomatic good offices, humanitarian aid, and occasional logistical assistance. The August 7, 1998, bombing of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya (two East African capitals previously considered friendly and low-risk by the U.S. Department of State), the August 25, 1998, bombing of a Planet Hollywood restaurant in Cape Town, South Africa, and the memory of American losses in Somalia continue to make any kind of robust intervention politically risky. U.S. disengagement from Africa has also served to reduce America’s official interest in promoting its Africa Crisis Response Initiative, a Clinton administration program launched in late 1996 to assist the creation of a Western-trained indigenous peacekeeping capacity. A U.S.-Africa Partnership Ministerial Summit, held in Washington, D.C., March 16–18, 1999, did provide a forum for high-level officials of sub-Saharan nations to discuss issues of common concern, and President Clinton proposed a \$70 billion debt-reduction plan for Africa, but the meeting failed to produce the type of monetary and other pledges for which some observers had been hoping. Likewise, the United States gave only minimal assistance to the two U.N. missions authorized by the Security Council in 1998: the U.N. Observer Mission in Sierra Leone and the U.N. Mission in the Central African Republic.

For Africa there were a **few bright spots** during 1998–99. South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, and Mali made steady progress toward the rule of law and respect for human rights [Human Rights Watch, *Africa Report* 1999]. Burundi’s steady progress toward ending a five-year civil war led to the lifting of regionally imposed sanctions on January 23, 1999. And, to the surprise of many, Africa’s most populous nation, Nigeria—long infamous for systemic corruption and oppressive military dictatorship—joined the ranks of African democracies.

Central and Southern Africa

On March 1, 1999, armed gunmen kidnapped 31 foreign tourists in western Uganda's Bwindi National Park. Eight of them—four Britons, two Americans, and two New Zealanders—were later murdered. After investigation of the incident, authorities determined that the attack in Uganda was carried out by Hutu militia from Rwanda operating from camps in the dense jungle of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This tragic incident offers a hint of Central Africa's convoluted political, ethnic, military, and economic situation. In fact, by 1998, a total of 9 individual national armies and 12 "irregular" armed forces were participating in the hostilities within the territory of the DRC, and 20 distinct rebel groups were operating in the region [U.N. press release HR/CN/893, 4/1/99]. Genocide, reprisals, mass migrations of terrified populations, and a seemingly endless cycle of rebellions, insurgencies, and counterinsurgencies have left their mark on Central-Southern Africa—the most unstable and bloody region on the planet.

The U.N. Security Council, the usual forum through which the international community would deal with peace and security issues, remained reluctant to engage the situation directly—a posture that is viewed with alarm in many quarters. "The Council's 'hands off' approach isn't working," noted one critical op-ed; and "its reliance on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to resolve the crisis has only inflamed it" [Eric G. Berman and Katie E. Sams in *Christian Science Monitor*, 1/20/99]. Warned the Security Council-mandated International Commission of Inquiry (Rwanda):

The situation in the Great Lakes region is rapidly heading towards a catastrophe of incalculable consequences which requires urgent, comprehensive and decisive measures on the part of the international community. The danger of a repetition of tragedy comparable to the Rwandan genocide of 1994, but on a subregional scale, cannot be ruled out.

[S/1998/1096, 11/18/98]

The new civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) is in fact an extension of the regional war whose roots lie in the **1994 genocide of Rwanda's Tutsi minority by the Hutu.**

In January 1994, Hutu elements of the Armed Forces of Rwanda and irregular militias slaughtered up to a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in less than 100 days—a genocidal spree that ended only when the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front defeated the forces of the Hutu government, driving some 2 million of its supporters into exile. In 1996, joining the campaign of Laurent Kabila to unseat Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese-Seko, Tutsi forces massacred tens of thousands of Hutu refugees. As a result, many of the estimated million, mostly Hutu, refugees who returned to Rwanda in that year were committed to fighting Rwanda's Tutsi-domi-