A GLOBAL AGENDA

ISSUES BEFORE THE 50TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

A Publication of the United Nations Association of the United States of America

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Foreword

The United Nations has turned 50. In San Francisco, the site of the U.N. Charter Conference in 1945, thousands of people from throughout the country (and the world) gathered in June 1995 to commemorate and celebrate a major milestone in the history of relations among nations. A few months later, the heads of state of more than 150 nations as well as the Pope would be arriving at U.N. Headquarters in New York to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ratification of that Charter—U.N. Day, October 24. But when all the speeches and all the dinners and all the media attention have faded, it is hoped that we will not lose sight of what the anniversary was really about—something far more important and more complex than can be reduced to a simple sound bite.

World War II is a distant memory for most of those who are old enough to have lived through it, and today there is a whole generation (maybe two) who have no real understanding of what it means to experience—in the words of the U.N. Charter—"the scourge of war." And though we know perfectly (and painfully) well that millions have continued to experience the horror of warfare all over the world, we have not, at least, experienced that most dreaded of all confrontations—World War III. For this we owe no little thanks to the United Nations.

At a time when some Americans—notably members of the new Congress—are expressing doubt as to the efficacy of the U.S.–U.N. relationship, particularly the return on our peacekeeping dollars, it is vital that we reexamine the role of the U.N. system throughout the world and its relevance to the welfare and security of our own nation. The editors of this volume might be forgiven if they suggest that *A Global Agenda* does much to point out that relevance. Taking as its subject the full scope of the Organization's agenda—as opposed to merely the highly publicized activities of peacekeeping and peace enforcement—*A Global Agenda* offers a comprehensive overview of the U.N.'s enormous social and humanitarian programs, accounting for fully 70 percent of the U.N. budget. Does the movement of millions of refugees and displaced people have an effect on the social and economic stability of other nations in the region? Does major human rights abuse by one government have an impact on

other, neighboring governments? Can a health epidemic in Africa spill over to countries on yet other continents? The answer to each of these questions is, of course, a resounding "yes."

The boat people of Cuba, Haiti, and even Vietnam and Cambodia have—literally and figuratively—landed on U.S. shores. The abused and oppressed of El Salvador, Guatemala, South Africa, and China have sought sanctuary in our communities. And the AIDS pandemic, as with all deadly viruses, is as mobile as an airline flight to any U.S. city. Polls show conclusively that the vast majority of Americans have accepted the ineluctable truth that we live in an interrelated world, where cooperation and "multilateralism" are essential and inescapable. Yet there are still those—including some in high places—who would like to ignore this reality and pull us into an anachronistic and dangerous neoisolationism. May this volume give them cause for reevaluation.

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If, as we believe, *A Global Agenda* contributes to the discussion and understanding of the work of the United Nations, then the credit must be given to those who have made this work possible. First we must acknowledge our contributing authors, whose expertise and commitment are the warp and woof of this volume. These dedicated men and women are identified in the following pages, and to each of them we offer our deep gratitude.

Also participating in the publishing process have been UNA-USA's Manager for Media Affairs, Nick Birnback, and University Press of America's Maureen Muncaster and Lynn Gemmell. They have been there to assist with what is a long and at times painful delivery.

Finally, there is—as there has been each year—a small cadre of interns to be acknowledged, young people who have freely given large amounts of their time and energy over the spring and summer months. These are Daretia Austin, Kestrina Budina, Thomas Carson, Felicia Gross, Eric Hesse, Sara Ann Mahmoud, Erin Meyer, Katherine Mossman, Adam Williams, and Anne Witt-Greenberg.

John Tessitore
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New York, July 1995

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Making and Keeping the Peace

1. Beyond Peacekeeping

By Ian Williams

This past year has been a momentous 12 months for U.N. peacekeeping, involving more operations, more people, and more money than any other year in the world body's 50-year history. It was also a year in which the failures received far more publicity than the successes, such that the United Nations now finds itself an organization sorely pressed from all sides.

The **major issue** facing the U.N. member nations in this 50th anniversary year is the **absence of a coherent policy on peacekeeping.** Unclear mandates, insufficient resources, and blurred lines of command have all put the Organization's credibility on the line at a time when its services are more necessary than ever. Rather than an "end to history" after the Cold War, the world has seen a rapid acceleration of history, at least in the sense of wars and conflicts. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali enumerated 89 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1992, of which only three were between states [Speech in Sydney, Australia, 4/27/95]. It has been fashionable to blame these conflicts on ancient ethnic hatreds, but other contributing factors include economic and social upheaval, ambitious politicians, and the ready availability of sophisticated weaponry.

A Very Bloody Year

The past year has witnessed **a record 18 peacekeeping missions,** involving some 78,000 peacekeepers in both intra- and interstate conflicts, as well as mixtures of the two. In some cases, missions have suffered from the lack of a firm commitment from the major powers, making an already complex job even more difficult. In recognition of the changing requirements of increasingly complex peacekeeping operations, the Secretariat undertook some strategic thinking on peacekeeping operations as reported in the Secretary-General's now famous 1992 report, *An Agenda*

for Peace. Commissioned by a Security Council Heads of State Summit, the report sets out the necessary preconditions to make the United Nations an effective and efficient tool in promoting world peace and security. The Secretary-General proposed, among other things, the "preventive deployment" of troops in trouble spots, "the earmarking of military units for U.N. use," and heavy "peace-enforcement operations" when necessary. However, some key member states viewed such proposals with suspicion and skepticism. The big powers, in particular, balked at the notion of creating a significant U.N. "standby" force. And while they were unsympathetic to the Secretary-General's innovative attempts to provide secure funding for the operations, it must be noted that they offered no constructive counterproposals.

In the face of such lukewarm support from the major powers, the Secretary-General issued an addendum to *An Agenda for Peace* in January 1995. It suggested that the only alternative for very large operations was U.N. authorization for member states themselves to take the initiative, as effectively happened in Desert Storm and, later, in Haiti. The Secretary-General's difficulties on the issue were dramatically illustrated when **U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright denounced the document** to the press even before the document was officially released, and without first advising the Secretary-General of U.S. views. The incident demonstrated—in a somewhat brutal fashion—the addendum's conclusion that there did not exist sufficient international support to permit large-scale peace-enforcement operations.

Curiously, the permanent Security Council members' lack of interest in renovating the mechanisms of peacekeeping has not stopped them from mandating new operations. Few states ever vote against a peacekeeping operation when requested, although they do—for various reasons, budgetary and political—occasionally procrastinate. The reluctance of the Perm Five to commit adequate and timely resources to operations that they have initiated has helped to contribute to the overall perception that peacekeeping operations are doomed to failure from the very outset. As such, the United Nations is caught in a bind when member states routinely authorize the deployment of peacekeeping operations with unclear mandates, insufficient resources, and inadequate infrastructural support. The **tragic U.S. Rangers operation in Mogadishu** in October 1993 is an unfortunate but crystalline example of the willingness of member states to leave the United Nations to twist in the wind should an operation become too controversial.

One partial solution the Secretary-General has suggested is employing **regional organizations** which, he says, "should take on more responsibility for peacekeeping in future as called for by the U.N. Charter" [Special Committee On Peacekeeping Operations, 4/95]. However, current examples of regional security arrangements being employed to keep the peace have not

been unqualified successes. The African initiatives in Somalia and Liberia showed a serious lack of resources; and even NATO, the best-funded regional organization with over 40 years of preparation for military operations, has not been especially eager to work on its own doorstep in the former Yugoslavia. Further, developing countries again see such efforts as another attempt by the industrialized countries to stick them with the financial and military burdens of peacekeeping.

The Potential of Peacekeeping

Despite the problems, there is no denying that U.N. peacekeeping represents an extraordinary multinational enterprise. No fewer than 82 nations contribute peacekeeping troops, ranging from France's 5,149 to Albania's one [U.N. spokesman's office, 3/31/95]. Even nonmember Switzerland contributes 26 troops and police. Operations of this scope are not without cost: 135 peacekeepers died in 1994 while serving under the U.N. flag.

Perhaps the most successful, cheapest, and least publicized operation was the **U.N. Observer Group in the Aouzou Strip (UNASOG),** which epitomized all that the Charter had intended for the conduct of world affairs. Both parties, Chad and Libya, had agreed to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and both accepted the decision, which was effectively in favor of Chad. The tiny U.N. force, drawn from six countries, monitored the agreed withdrawal of forces, thus fulfilling one of the primary stipulations for traditional peacekeeping operations (PKOs)—that all parties concerned must want the peacekeeping force. Consequently, the United Nations was able to act as a neutral buffer between the two parties, and in less than two months the agreement was implemented and the mission over. UNASOG also highlighted the important and underused capability of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to resolve problems between states.

Of course the ICJ has no jurisdiction in internal conflicts and, strictly speaking, neither does the United Nations. Nonetheless, the Secretariat—and specifically the Secretary-General—has chalked up some impressive successes when its good offices have been welcomed by all the parties concerned. For example, the successful termination on May 1, 1994, of ONUSAL, the U.N. operation in El Salvador, showed that the presence of an outside, impartial, third party could bring to an end a vicious internecine conflict. In this case it provided sufficient guarantees of security for the opposing sides to stand down their forces and effect a reconciliation. "No Salvadoran . . . would deny that the United Nations has left a strong base on which to build," commented Larry Rohter of the *New York Times* [4/29/95]. The success of UNASOG and ONUSAL clearly demonstrates the important positive role that peacekeepers can play when

the missions are provided with clear mandates, achievable objectives, and the consent of all parties concerned.

However, the measure of success is not always this clear. The operation in Cyprus (UNICYP) has averted war between Turkey and Greece for some 30 years. But in doing so, it has fossilized the armistice line and ethnic division that, in principle at least, every party considers unacceptable. While it is true as the Secretary-General states that an outbreak of hostilities would be even more unacceptable, the government of Croatia, for one, cited its fear of "Cypriotization" as a reason for its insistence on changing the mandate of the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) within its borders. Zagreb's impatience with what it perceived as a static situation also led to the overrunning of Western Slavonia by the Croatian Army in May 1995, rendering moot the presence of U.N. forces in the region.

The successful U.N.-sanctioned intervention in Haiti by U.S. troops—begun in September 1994 and concluded on March 1995—provides a clear example of the Secretary-General's observation that the only alternative to well-funded and clearly mandated U.N. operations is U.N. authorization for unilateral action by member states. The Haiti operation followed an emerging pattern of "franchise" operations first illustrated by Desert Storm.

In the case of Rwanda, as news came of the massacres in April 1994, the small and badly equipped U.N. force in Kigali was left to its own devices. Washington, beset by a Congress reluctant to commit more money, stalled on finance. Other countries stalled on troop contributions. The eventual unilateral response by the French, dubbed Operation Turquoise, was widely viewed as a move to prop up France's Rwandan client government, and was accepted only as a *faut de mieux* in June 1994 by other Council members. The Russians followed the trend toward franchising by getting a U.N. badge for their operation in Georgia. Although the "farming out" of missions can certainly be effective in peace-enforcement operations, the method relies on the great powers to decide that an operation is directly in their own national interest. Thus, Haiti was above all a U.S. operation and, as New Zealand Ambassador Colin Keating said archly, he hoped that the Council would show similar alacrity when other democracies "farther away" were threatened.

And the Pitfalls

A similar clear-cut franchise operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) might have avoided the ignominious exit of U.N. forces from that war-torn nation. UNOSOM II raised many questions about the wisdom of the U.N. undertaking peace-enforcement operations at all, and in particular missions undertaken with unclear mandates and an uncertain chain of com-

mand. The U.N. forces in Somalia somehow became identified as colonists and invaders. The Secretariat pointed in vain to its success in delivering humanitarian aid, but the image of a defeated and demoralized operation staging a heavily armed retreat in the face of hostile forces was fixed firmly in the public consciousness, eroding support for future similarly ambitious operations.

These problems were amplified by the situation in the Balkans, where UNPROFOR has been depicted almost as an accomplice of the Serbs by the Bosnian government and significant sections of the media. Public opinion is understandably perplexed when victims and transgressors are treated as moral equals in accordance with traditional peacekeeping doctrine. As the Secretary-General explained: "We are not allowed to intervene in favor of the victims. . . . We are supposed to be neutral and objective, so we are limited by our mandate" [Press conference, National Press Club, Australia, 4/28/95].

Perhaps the fundamental problem with the UNPROFOR operation has been that the essential premise of peacekeeping—that the parties involved should want peace—is clearly inapplicable in Bosnia and Croatia. The Serbs have wanted to hold on to what they seized in defiance of U.N. resolutions, and the Bosnians and the Croatians want it back. In fact, the Secretariat was originally correct in its contention that Bosnia, in particular, is not a suitable subject for peacekeeping. The clear implication of the imposition of sanctions against Belgrade as the aggressor was that this should have been an undisguised Chapter VII peace-enforcement operation similar to that which it had undertaken in the Persian Gulf. However, the Security Council members—seeking a way of balancing domestic pressure for something to be done against their unwillingness to commit the forces necessary to be effective—chose instead to attempt a traditional peacekeeping operation under untraditional conditions.

The problems of implementation are increasingly worsened by political differences among members of the Council. A continuously shifting U.S. position was countered by an increasingly firm Russian tilt toward the Serbian side, making it impossible to fine-tune the resolutions in the face of changes in the region. The differences of opinion and focus were reflected in a confusion of diplomatic moves, which frequently acted at cross-purposes. Although the Secretary-General welcomed these various initiatives, they actually reflect the weakness of the United Nations itself, which in turn represents the inability of the major powers to achieve a firm consensus.

However, the situation in the Balkans does provide a living example of the efficacy of the type of preemptive peacemaking ("preventive deployment") called for in *An Agenda for Peace*. In contrast to the initial failure to station troops on the Bosnian border, the speedy deployment of forces—including a major U.S. component—on the Macedonia-Serb

border has proven visibly successful in securing the region. Now called UNPREDEP (since UNPROFOR divided into three separate operations on March 31, 1995), the U.S. troop contingent has been reinforced to 800.

Financial Problems

Since peacekeeping is not explicitly provided for in the Charter, it must be financed by a special assessment. Once the proposal has made its way through the international committees, authorization to pay for it must then survive national decision-making processes. In the case of the United States, that means that the funding voted for in the Security Council may not be approved by the Congress, if the legislature judges the operation to be too expensive or not in America's own best interests. With the United States as the largest contributor by far, **Capitol Hill's current hostility** toward the world organization has made it even more difficult for the Organization to plan or operate effectively.

However, polls indicate that congressional attitudes toward the United Nations do not necessarily reflect the views of the American people. Even after a year of bad press over Somalia and Bosnia, 67 percent of those polled still strongly supported U.N. peacekeeping operations. Remarkably, support remains at this level despite a widespread overestimation of the cost to the United States. Many polled thought that the U.S. commitment of troops should be halved from 40 percent of peacekeeping forces to 20 percent, when in fact only 4 percent of U.N. troops are from the United States. Similarly, the majority of those polled believed that 22 percent of the federal budget went for U.N. operations, when in fact less than 1 percent of the U.S. defense budget goes to such operations [*New York Times*, 4/30/95].

The lack of funds and the member states' unwillingness to take up the Secretary-General's suggestions for funding reform and pretraining units for U.N. operations has led to unusual problems, such as those caused by the Croatian government's demands that troops stationed there should be from, first, NATO, then Western Europe, then the Contact Group (i.e., the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations) [*Christian Science Monitor*, 3/13/94]. Since the primary common feature of these groups is the skin color of most of their inhabitants, this was seen as a form of racism, but the official explanation did raise a serious question. Peacekeeping operations used to involve contingents of well-equipped, well-trained troops from a fairly selective group of, usually, neutral countries. Most U.N. observers agree that the vast expansion of U.N. operations has diluted the overall quality somewhat, and it seems undeniable that at least a few contributing nations see their contingents more as a source of hard currency than as a contribution to peace.

Faced with a rapidly expanding demand and a shrinking supply,