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# The UN's Prevention Pipe-Dream

By  
Thomas G. Weiss†

Euphoria at the end of the Cold War was short-lived. The optimism of November 1989 regarding new operating assumptions for world politics now seems like ancient history. It is as if scholars and politicians awoke with a hangover. George Bush's "new world order," and Bill Clinton's "assertive multilateralism" have ceded to more sober views. Yet the 1996 Presidential campaigns failed to produce new slogans about American national interests and global governance.<sup>1</sup> In the face of a new breed of dangers, particularly the growing number of civil wars, a pronounced uncertainty prevails.

Aside from the inherent global political tensions arising from civil conflicts, the growing instability has dramatic consequences for the political and

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1. For contrasting partisan views, see Warren Christopher, *America's Leadership, America's Opportunity*, FOREIGN POLICY 98, Spring 1995, at 6; and Bob Dole, *Shaping America's Global Future*, FOREIGN POLICY 98, Spring 1995, at 29, and Jesse Helms, *Saving the U.N.: A Challenge to the Next Secretary-General*, FOREIGN AFFAIRS 75, September/October 1996, at 2. For a bi-partisan overview on the eve of the 1996 presidential elections, see GEORGE SOROS, CHAIRMAN OF AN INDEPENDENT TASK FORCE, *AMERICAN NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE UNITED NATIONS* (1996). See also, U. S. FOREIGN POLICY AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (Charles William Maynes and Richard S. Williamson eds., 1996), and JOHN GERARD RUGGIE, *WINNING THE PEACE: AMERICA AND WORLD ORDER IN THE NEW ERA* (1996).

social structures of the state. Democratization and liberalization have spread, but so too has the plague of micro-nationalism, fragmentation, and massive suffering for those who have fled from, as well as those who remain, in today's war zones. The demise of East-West tensions did not result in the peaceful triumph of Western liberal democracy and capitalism, nor in the much heralded "end of history" referred to by Francis Fukuyama.<sup>2</sup> Rather, this latest installment in inaccurate but highly visible forecasting has ushered in a painful epoch with record numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons, and other victims.<sup>3</sup>

That one in every 115 citizens of the world is displaced by war, and that probably an equal number remain behind with their lives totally disrupted, represents the tragic human consequence of contemporary armed conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Failed and collapsed states dominate discussions about the future of Africa.<sup>5</sup> Yet, that continent's plight is by no means unique, as the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, several former Soviet republics, Afghanistan, and elsewhere demonstrate. Even if one does not agree with Robert Kaplan's apocalyptic visions of "the coming anarchy,"<sup>6</sup> in which "Liberias" and "Rwandas" become more and more commonplace, the pain and suffering from recent civil wars<sup>7</sup> raises a basic question: Instead of reacting after the fact, could the international community not forestall such disasters?

"Prevention" has thus emerged as a policy panacea, spawning a veritable cottage industry of analysis since 1992, when former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called for this new security priority in *An Agenda for Peace*. "The most desirable and efficient employment of diplomacy," he wrote, "is to ease tensions before they result in conflict—or, if con-

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2. FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN* (1992).

3. For discussions of the international delivery system and involuntary migration, see GIL LOESCHER, *BEYOND CHARITY: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS* (1993); and FRANCIS M. DENG, *PROTECTING THE DISPOSSESSED: A CHALLENGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY* (1993).

4. For these and other disheartening statistics, see *THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES 1995: IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS* (1995). See also *1996 WORLD REFUGEE REPORT* (Washington, DC: U. S. Committee for Refugees, 1996); *WORLD DISASTERS REPORT 1996* (1996); and *BREAD FOR THE WORLD INSTITUTE, COUNTRIES IN CONFLICT* (1995).

5. See Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, *Saving Failed States*, *FOREIGN POLICY* 89, Winter 1992-93, at 3; and *COLLAPSED STATES: THE DISINTEGRATION AND RESTORATION OF LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY* (I. William Zartman ed., 1995).

6. Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy*, *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY* 273, no. 2, Feb. 1994, at 44. See also Robert Kaplan, *THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: A JOURNEY AT THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY* (1996). For a sensitive and sensible critique, see Neta Crawford, *Imag(in)ing Africa*, *PRESS/POLITICS* 1, no. 2 (1995), at 30-44.

7. For a discussion of the phenomenon of fragmentation, see *ENFORCING RESTRAINT: COLLECTIVE INTERVENTION IN INTERNAL CONFLICTS* (Lori Fisler Damrosch ed., 1993); *ETHNIC CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY* (Michael E. Brown ed., 1993) and *INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL CONFLICTS* (1996); TED ROBERT GURR AND BARBARA HARFF, *ETHNIC CONFLICT IN WORLD POLITICS* (1994); GIDON GOTTLIEB, *NATION AGAINST STATE* (1993); and *RECONSTRUCTING NATIONS AND STATES*, SPECIAL ISSUE OF *DÆDALUS* 122, no. 3 (1993). For discussions of the difficulties of negotiating the end to such wars, see *ELUSIVE PEACE: NEGOTIATING AN END TO CIVIL WARS* (I. William Zartman ed., 1995), and FEN OSLER HAMPSON, *NURTURING PEACE: WHY PEACE SETTLEMENTS SUCCEED OR FAIL* (1996).

flict breaks out, to act swiftly to contain it and resolve its underlying causes.”<sup>8</sup> His preventive diplomacy ranges from fact-finding, economic development, and confidence-building on the one hand, to the deployment of troops on the other. The real priority, however, should be the latter, namely to prevent crisis situations.

Prevention is not a new concept for the United Nations. In the very first article of the world organization's Charter, the maintenance of international peace and security is the first purpose mentioned, “and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.”<sup>9</sup> But the avoidance of deadly armed conflicts—or of their escalation once violence erupts—has only recently assumed real importance on the international policy agenda. The magnitude of destruction and displacement from complex emergencies and the mounting costs associated with responding to them have brought a new urgency, at least rhetorically, to pro-action rather than reaction. On the surface, this has produced results: the creation of a special subgroup on prevention of the General Assembly's Working Group on *An Agenda for Peace*, as well as funding for prevention activities from a host of private and public sources, including special projects by the Carnegie Corporation, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the U.S. Institute of Peace. Notwithstanding the increasing visibility of this catchy intellectual fashion, is the international community, led by the United Nations, able to make a serious contribution in this arena?

This is the central question in this essay. I begin with an overview of the dominant trends in recent UN responses to the changing world politics of security since the end of the Cold War. The essay will then examine the problems and prospects for prevention. As a preview of the world organization's future potential for preventive action, I will examine the UN's effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security over the last five years. Unfortunately, as this essay demonstrates, the record is not encouraging.

#### WHAT IS HAPPENING?<sup>10</sup>

The onset of the post-Cold War era initially reinvigorated the United Nations. After four decades of animosity and stalemate, relative collegiality emerged among the Security Council's great powers.<sup>11</sup> The framers of the UN Charter originally envisioned just such collaboration as the basis for a new security regime, and many hoped that the original purposes of the Security Council could be fulfilled. Although the reinvigoration has withered, there remain

8. BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, *AN AGENDA FOR PEACE*, par. 23 (1992). This United Nations Document, along with his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, document A/50/60-S/1995/1, have been published together in *An Agenda for Peace 1995* (1995). Paragraph numbers are the same as in the original.

9. U.N. Charter art. 1, ¶ 1.

10. This section builds on arguments first made in Thomas G. Weiss, *THE UNITED NATIONS AT FIFTY: RECENT LESSONS, CURRENT HISTORY* 94, no. 592, May 1995, at 218.

11. See *THIRD WORLD SECURITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA* (Thomas G. Weiss and Meryl A. Kessler eds., 1991).

inveterate optimists and committed believers—how else do we explain such rosy visions such as *Our Global Neighbourhood*,<sup>12</sup> the title of the report from an eminent international commission?

The dominant reality is more somber. There is no longer the multilateral bullishness that followed the flurry of largely successful peacekeeping operations in the late 1980s and the enforcement action against Iraq in 1991, the first since Korea in the early 1950s.<sup>13</sup> There have been well-publicized (if not always accurate) depictions of UN shortcomings or outright failures with respect to efforts in Bosnia, Croatia, Haiti, and Rwanda. Somalia, however, was the watershed. The unseemly images of dead Marines being dragged through Mogadishu's streets soured Washington on participation in UN operations. As a result, facile notions that spawned the mission—that a quick, painless intervention could succeed in halting human rights abuses while securing sustained humanitarian access to victims of war—succumbed to more realistic assessments.<sup>14</sup> Others argue that the UN's impotence in Bosnia, in the face of brutal atrocities, discredited peacekeeping; former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, who is generally credited with engineering the Dayton peace agreements, suggests that "[t]he damage that Bosnia did to the U.N. was incalculable."<sup>15</sup> Whichever debacle wins first prize, policy makers are no longer inclined to turn to robust military intervention "to loose the bonds of wickedness."<sup>16</sup>

The number and scope of what Leslie Gelb has dubbed "wars of national debilitation"<sup>17</sup> may simply thwart rational thought and induce nihilism. But they may also push observers to ask: Is it not possible to mount more effective

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12. COMMISSION ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, *OUR GLOBAL NEIGHBOURHOOD* (1995); SOUTH CENTRE, *FOR A STRONG AND DEMOCRATIC UNITED NATION: A SOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON UN REFORM* (1996); INDEPENDENT WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, *THE UNITED NATIONS IN ITS SECOND HALF-CENTURY* (1995); and GARETH EVANS, *COOPERATING FOR PEACE: THE GLOBAL AGENDA FOR THE 1990s AND BEYOND* (1993).

13. Good examples of the growing literature are: WILLIAM J. DURCH, ed., *THE EVOLUTION OF UN PEACEKEEPING: CASE STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS* (1993) and *UN PEACEKEEPING, AMERICAN POLICY, AND THE UNCIVIL WARS OF THE 1990s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); PAUL DIEHL, *INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); MATS R. BERDAL, *WHITHER UN PEACEKEEPING?* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 281, 1993); and STEVEN R. RATNER, *THE NEW UN PEACEKEEPING: BUILDING PEACE IN LANDS OF CONFLICT AFTER THE COLD WAR* (1995).

14. See Tom J. Farer, *Intervention in Unnatural Humanitarian Emergencies: Lessons of the First Phase*, *HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY* 18, no. 1, pp. 1-22 (February 1996) and Thomas G. Weiss, *Overcoming the Somalia Syndrome - 'Operation Rekindle Hope'?*, *GLOBAL GOVERNANCE* 1, no. 2, pp. 171-187 (May-Aug. 1995).

15. Alison Mitchell, *Clinton's About-Face*, *N. Y. TIMES*, p. A8 (Sept. 24, 1996). For a discussion of the impact of Somalia, see Tom J. Farer, *Intervention in Unnatural Humanitarian Emergencies: Lessons of the First Phase*, *HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY* 18, no. 1, pp.1-22 (Feb. 1996); and Thomas G. Weiss, *Overcoming the Somalia Syndrome - 'Operation Rekindle Hope'?* *GLOBAL GOVERNANCE* 1, no. 2, 171-187 (May-Aug. 1995).

16. NIGEL RODLEY, ed., *TO LOOSE THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS: INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS* (London: Brassey's 1992).

17. Leslie H. Gelb, *Quelling the Teacup Wars*, *FOREIGN AFFAIRS* 73, no. 6, at 5 (Nov./Dec. 1994). Wars of debilitation refer to situations where members of the same clan in Somalia, or former neighbors in Bosnia and Rwanda commit war crimes daily, where there are countless bodies and horrors resulting from civil and ethnic violence.

international preventive measures to cut short the violence and displacement caused by armed conflicts? In the first half decade of the post-Cold War era, however, there is little evidence that we can.

The prospects for meaningful prevention are rendered bleak by the short-run perspectives of governments, and the resulting imperatives of myopic decisionmaking, regardless of the appeal of "a stitch in time" to multilateral ears. Even with the arrival of humanitarianism as a driving security consideration for policymakers, pundits, parliamentarians, and the public,<sup>18</sup> three trends in world politics tend to limit the UN's effectiveness in forestalling humanitarian crises: the growing number of civil wars, the burgeoning demand for UN military operations, and increased subcontracting.

### *Civil Wars*

The most significant feature of international responses in the last five years has been the growing willingness of the international community to address, rather than ignore, emergencies within the borders of war-torn states. Eighty-two armed conflicts broke out in the half decade following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Seventy-nine of these were intrastate wars. Of the remaining three, two (Nagorno-Karabakh and Bosnia) could also be categorized as civil wars.<sup>19</sup>

The UN's founders did not envision the prevalence of civil wars; the organization's constitution is geared almost exclusively toward regulating relations among sovereign states, and lawyers are quick to point to the non-intervention clause in UN Charter Article 2(7). But humanitarian imperatives have led governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to expand legal doctrine and redefine, when possible, the language which prohibits intervention "in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state . . ." <sup>20</sup> This is particularly necessary when we consider that in some conflicts there is no real sovereign (as with Somalia), and in others sovereignty is overridden in the name of higher norms (as with the Kurds in northern Iraq).<sup>21</sup>

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18. See LARRY MINEAR and THOMAS G. WEISS, *MERCY UNDER FIRE: WAR AND THE GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY* (Boulder: Westview, 1995) and *HUMANITARIAN POLITICS* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995); and THOMAS G. WEISS and CINDY COLLINS, *HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTION: WORLD POLITICS AND THE DILEMMAS OF HELP* (Boulder: Westview, 1996). See also JONATHAN MOORE, *THE UN AND COMPLEX EMERGENCIES* (Geneva: UN Research Institute for Social Development, 1996).

19. UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

20. U.N. Charter art. 2, ¶7.

21. See Jarat Chopra and Thomas G. Weiss, *Sovereignty Is No Longer Sacrosanct: Codifying Humanitarian Intervention*, *ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS* 6 (1992), pp. 95-117. For a series of essays, see GENE M. LYONS and MICHAEL MASTANDUNO, *BEYOND WESTPHALIA? NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERVENTION* (1995); PAUL A. WINTERS, *INTERVENTIONISM: CURRENT CONTROVERSIES* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1995); and MARIANNE HEIBERG, *SUBDUING SOVEREIGNTY AND THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE* (1994). For a reasoned presentation of some negative and positive arguments in light of international relations theory, see ERNST B. HAAS, *BEWARE THE SLIPPERY SLOPE: NOTES TOWARD THE DEFINITION OF JUSTIFIABLE INTERVENTION* (1993). For an exhaustive review of the literature, see OLIVER FAMSBOOTHAM and TOM WOODHOUSE, *HUMANITARIAN INTERVEN-*

Observers continue to debate the extent to which the present world disorder is new or old.<sup>22</sup> What is certain is that the two dominant norms of Cold War global world politics—namely that borders were sacrosanct and that secession was unthinkable—no longer generate the almost universal acceptance they once did, even among states. Nevertheless, preventing civil wars is, if anything, even more problematic than preventing interstate armed conflicts.

### *Burgeoning Demand for UN Military Operations*

The second trend relates to the rapid growth in demand for UN soldiers. The Security Council has approved more than twice as many military operations in the last eight years as in the previous forty.<sup>23</sup> Former Secretary General Boutros-Ghali wrote in January 1995: "This increased volume of activity would have strained the Organization even if the nature of the activity had remained unchanged."<sup>24</sup> And as we have already seen, the nature of UN operations has changed fundamentally.

A closer examination of UN activities reveals an increasing strain upon both the UN's human and financial resources. After stable levels of about 10,000 troops in the early post-Cold War period and a budget of a few hundred million dollars, the numbers have jumped dramatically. In the past few years, the Security Council has authorized 70,000 to 80,000 blue-helmeted soldiers, and in 1995 the UN's annualized "military" (peacekeeping) budget approached \$4 billion. Accumulated total debts and budgetary arrears in the same year hovered around \$3.5 billion, an amount nearly equal to the peacekeeping budget, and three times the amount of non-military UN expenditures. The former Secretary-General periodically laments that "the difficult financial situation . . . is increasingly proving to be the most serious obstacle to the effective management of the organization."<sup>25</sup>

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TION IN CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT (1996). See also JOHN HARRISS, *THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* (London: Pinter, 1995); JAMES MAYALL, *THE NEW INTERVENTIONISM: UNITED NATIONS EXPERIENCE IN CAMBODIA, FORMER YUGOSLVIA, AND SOMALIA* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and JAN NEEDERVEEN PIETERSE, *WORLD ORDERS IN THE MAKING: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND BEYOND* (London: Macmillan, forthcoming).

22. See MOHAMMED AYOOB, *The New-Old Disorder in the Third World*; THOMAS G. WEISS, *THE UNITED NATIONS AND CIVIL WARS* (1993); and MOHAMMED AYOOB, *THE THIRD WORLD SECURITY PREDICAMENT: STATE MAKING, REGIONAL CONFLICT, AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM* (1995). See also KALEVI J. HOLSTI, *THE STATE, WAR, AND THE STATE OF WAR* (1996); ROBERT JACKSON, *QUASI STATES: SOVEREIGNTY, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE THIRD WORLD* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); JOEL MIGDAL, *STRONG STATES AND WEAK SOCIETIES: STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS AND STATE CAPABILITIES IN THE THIRD WORLD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and EDWARD E. RICE, *WARS OF THE THIRD KIND: CONFLICT IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

23. The dramatic increase in activities in the first half of the 1990s has led to a corresponding growth in analyses of peacekeeping. For an overview, see THOMAS G. WEISS and CINDY COLLINS, *THE PEACEKEEPING LITERATURE, 1990-1996* (Providence: Watson Institute, Occasional Paper 28, forthcoming 1997).

24. BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, *SUPPLEMENT TO AN AGENDA FOR PEACE*, para.77.

25. BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, *REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION, AUGUST 1995, DOCUMENT A/50/1* para.22.

Despite the substantial drop in 1996 in the number of UN soldiers and the peacekeeping budget (largely due to the shift of the Bosnia peacekeeping operation to NATO), the UN's present financial and professional problems will continue with no real solution in sight. This seems to result from "strategic overstretch" by the UN—a condition that Paul Kennedy has attributed to empires<sup>26</sup>—but which also seems apt as a partial description for a world organization stretched beyond its capacities. Overextension was the most accurate diagnosis of the UN's ills on its fiftieth anniversary in 1995, and this situation hardly bodes well for a new and largely untested activity, such as prevention.

### *Increased Subcontracting for Security and Services*

The third trend in some ways arises from the first two: the practice of subcontracting for military services provided by regional organizations or major states on the one hand, and subcontracting with international NGOs for humanitarian delivery services on the other.<sup>27</sup> There are many recent examples of the UN's devolving military responsibilities. The pursuit of the Gulf War and the creation of safe havens for Kurds are clear and successful illustrations of military subcontracting, as is NATO's Implementation Force in the Former Yugoslavia (IFOR). A more controversial and less successful example was that of Somalia.

In addition, the United Nations increasingly has accepted military intervention by the major powers in regions within their traditional spheres of influence. This trend is illustrated by three Security Council decisions between late June and late July 1994. Firstly, a Russian scheme to deploy its troops in Georgia to end the three-year-old civil war; secondly, the French intervention in Rwanda to help stave off genocidal conflict; and thirdly, the US plan to spearhead a military invasion to reverse the military coup in Haiti. Another illustration was the decision in December 1994 by the Conference (now Organization) on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to authorize 3,000 troops, drawn from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other OSCE member states, after a definitive agreement was reached in Nagorno-Karabakh. Earlier efforts in Liberia by Nigeria and other countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were of a similar kind.

Although commentators, military and civilian alike, agree that the results from these arrangements have not been uniformly beneficial either to victims or to troop-contributing countries, the evident gap between the UN's capacities, and the increasing demands upon it may require greater action by regional or world powers. This clearly is not collective security of the Charter variety.<sup>28</sup>

26. PAUL KENNEDY, *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GREAT POWERS* (1987).

27. This is the subject of a research endeavor under the auspices of the Academic Council on the United Nations System. See THOMAS G. WEISS and EDWIN M. SMITH, *BEYOND UN SUBCONTRACTING: TASK-SHARING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDING NGOS*, *THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY* 18, no. 3 (forthcoming 1997).

28. See Leon Gordenker & Thomas G. Weiss, *The Collective Security Idea and Changing World Politics*, in *COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN A CHANGING WORLD 3* (Thomas G. Weiss ed., 1993).

Coalitions of the willing under separate command and control are totally different from the automatic mobilization of soldiers by all member states under the command and control of the UN Secretary-General. In fact, the Security Council is flirting with the very sort of "great power" domination over decisionmaking and enforcement that the United Nations was originally founded to end. Nevertheless, such a tactic is pragmatic in light of the inherent difficulties of multilateral mobilization and management of military force.<sup>29</sup>

This development may disappoint die-hard UN enthusiasts, who expect truly universal decisions backed by universal means for enforcement, however unrealistic or impractical such a system may be. But subcontracting is actually a sensible step toward improving international peace and security. Major powers will inevitably flex their muscles in the pursuit of their perceived interests, but they do not inevitably subject themselves to international law and monitoring. By agreeing to operate under the scrutiny of a wider community of states, the interveners can be held more accountable for their actions.<sup>30</sup> Thus, influencing the behavior of would-be subcontractors is a feasible step toward better global governance.

A second kind of subcontracting is the growing role international NGOs play to mitigate the suffering of armed conflicts.<sup>31</sup> This is part of a larger development: namely the burgeoning of nongovernmental organizations in all sectors which have injected new and unexpected voices into international discourse.<sup>32</sup> Over the last two decades, but especially during the 1990s, human rights advocates, gender activists, developmentalists, and groups of indigenous peoples have become more vocal and operational in many contexts that were once thought to be the exclusive preserve of governments.<sup>33</sup> As the role of the state dwindles and is reappraised, and as analysts and policymakers seek alternatives to help solve problems, NGOs emerge as critical actors—private in form, but public in purpose.

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29. For an outspoken Realist view on this subject, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promise of International Institutions*, 19 INT'L SECURITY, Winter 1994-95, at 5.

30. See S. Neil MacFarlane and Thomas G. Weiss, *Regional Organizations and Regional Security*, 2 SECURITY STUD., Autumn 1992, at 6. For an extended argument about a "partnership" between the UN and regional organizations, see Alan K. Henrikson, *The Growth of Regional Organizations and the Role of the United Nations*, in REGIONALISM IN WORLD POLITICS: REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND WORLD ORDER 122 (Louise Fawcett & Andrew Hurrell eds., 1995). The discussion about the components of accountability was first made in relationship to Russia by Jarat Chopra & Thomas G. Weiss, *Prospects for Containing Conflict in the Former Second World*, 4 SECURITY STUD., Spring 1995, at 552. See also PEACEKEEPING AND THE ROLE OF RUSSIA IN EURASIA (Lena Jonson & Clive Archer eds., 1996).

31. For a longer discussion, see Thomas G. Weiss, *Nongovernmental Organizations and Internal Conflict*, in INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL CONFLICT 435-59 (Michael E. Brown ed., 1996).

32. See BERTRAND SCHNEIDER, *THE BAREFOOT REVOLUTION: A REPORT TO THE CLUB OF ROME* (1988); LESTER M. SALAMON & HELMUT K. ANHEIER, *THE EMERGING SECTOR: AN OVERVIEW* (1994). For a recent set of essays linking this phenomenon to multilateralism, see NGOs, THE UN, AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker eds., 1996).

33. See Paul Wapner, *Politics Beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics*, 47 WORLD POL., April 1995, at 311; and Peter J. Spiro, *New Global Communities: Nongovernmental Organizations in International Decision-Making Institutions*, 18 WASHINGTON Q., Winter 1995, at 45.

Delivery of services is the mainstay of most NGO budgets, and the basis for enthusiastic support from a wide range of donors. As part of a "privatization" of both development and relief, bilateral and intergovernmental organizations are currently increasing their reliance upon NGOs.<sup>34</sup> The last twenty years have witnessed exponential growth, such that the total value of assistance delivered by NGOs now outweighs that disbursed by the UN system (excluding the Washington-based financial institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund). Many NGOs run development programs; but increasingly the delivery of migration and disaster relief is becoming, in total financial terms, their main activity.

Operational NGOs are central to comprehensive international responses to civil wars in the post-Cold War world. In 1995, at least 13 percent of total public development aid—some \$8-10 billion officially, but probably much more as neither food aid nor military assistance figures accurately in statistics—was disbursed by NGOs. Nearly half of this was emergency relief. With a six-fold increase in emergency spending over the last decade, NGO humanitarian relief has become a big business. Having literally hundreds of subcontractors delivering similar goods and services in a disjointed and competitive marketplace during the tumult of wars means that part of the dramatic growth must be driven by NGOs themselves.<sup>35</sup> That is why it is unclear how much of the rise in expenditures may be due to inefficiencies and increasing administrative costs.<sup>36</sup>

At the rhetorical level, both regional organizations and NGOs espouse greater preventive efforts. But as a practical matter, both are preoccupied with the immediate challenges of massive human displacements, human rights violations, and violence. Neither group is in the position to undertake, even on a subcontractual basis, the kinds of prevention needed in times of crisis and those being discussed as a possibility for the UN.

#### WHITHER PREVENTION?

There are substantial costs associated with reacting to threats to international peace and security, particularly for outsiders sending troops or emergency relief. But these costs pale in comparison to those borne by local populations whose social fabric is destroyed, along with its economic base for future development. With tension, violence, and war spreading, and with their consequences so dire, would it not make more sense to act earlier so as to head them off?

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34. For a discussion and statistics, see IAN SMILLIE, *THE ALMS BAZAAR: ALTRUISM UNDER FIRE—NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT* (1995). See also a set of books edited by Michael Edwards & David Hulme: *MAKING A DIFFERENCE: NGOs AND DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD* (1992); *BEYOND THE MAGIC BULLET: NGO PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD* (1996); and *TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT? NGOs, STATES AND DONORS* (1997).

35. For a discussion, see JON BENNETT, *MEETING NEEDS: NGO COORDINATION IN PRACTICE* (1995).

36. For these and other developments, see *THE REALITY OF AID 1996: AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AID* (Judith Randel and Tony German eds., 1996).

Although many specialists in international security are ready to answer in the affirmative, calculations by state decisionmakers about the pluses and minuses of prevention are held hostage to myopic calculations of *raisons d'état*. Preventive diplomacy is merely the latest conceptual fad—one passionate but realistic advocate called it “an idea in search of a strategy.”<sup>37</sup> The need for prevention was originally behind Chapter VI of the UN Charter (“Pacific Settlement of Disputes”), and many efforts were part of the UN’s routine by 1945, and throughout the Cold War. These early activities, as well as appropriate adaptations of such European confidence-building measures as mutual downsizing, joint exercises, and public announcements of troop movements, are plausible components of UN peacetime preventive diplomacy. Other actions, such as the expanded use of fact-finding missions, human rights monitors, and early-warning systems are being discussed and implemented. Even these measures, though, seem unlikely to deter the types of wars that are a plague on the international house at this time.

Much the same thing must be said about activities linked to economic and social development, which are generally viewed as essential to help prevent armed conflicts. These too have been UN preoccupations, both rhetorical and operational, since US President John F. Kennedy called for launching the First Development Decade in the early 1960s. Unfortunately, many discussions about “development as prevention” reflect a manifestly impractical and misplaced notion of trying to remove any possible source of economic and social conflict. Inequities may be one source of armed conflict; but this is not always the case, as the meager results from generous assistance in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda demonstrate. In such cases, the reward of large-scale investment in both economic and social development cannot be encouraging to advocates for “preventive development” as a “necessary complement to preventive diplomacy,” such as the last UN Secretary-General.<sup>38</sup> In any case, there are few funds available. Resources for development assistance have declined steadily throughout this decade, and are likely to continue their descent in absolute terms as well as in terms of a percentage of the GDPs of major Western donors.<sup>39</sup>

However useful such preventive peacetime measures, defusing tensions (for example, avoiding the outbreak of war in a Macedonia) and forestalling massive displacement and suffering (for example, halting even worse atrocities in a Rwanda torn by genocide) require more deliberate military action. But this sort of endeavor, given the “high politics” affecting the military forces and national security of its member states, is acutely difficult for the United Nations.

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37. See MICHAEL S. LUND, PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY 27 (1994). See also MICHAEL S. LUND, PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICTS: A STRATEGY FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY (1996).

38. BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, AN AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT 1995, at 90 under “recommendations” (1995).

39. See the annual report from the Chairman of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). *Development Co-operation* (Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996); and *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* (Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, May 1996). See also THE REALITY OF AID 1996 (Randel and German eds., 1996).

The most indispensable and cost-effective preventive measure, the deployment of troops, is considerably more problematic than such peacetime preventive measures as better early warning and fact-finding. Moreover, imposing a UN peacekeeping force to forestall the outbreak of violence and war may not be possible—or even desirable. Hence, some observers argued that an outside force in Burundi could unleash a full-scale ethnic conflict rather than prevent one. In a similar vein, the inadvisability of stopping the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) liberation of the country comes to mind as an argument for not preventing the “just” part of the 1994 Rwandan violence.

Furthermore, even when it is possible and advisable to act, the nature of the UN decision-making process often impedes the deployment of preventive forces. To be a deterrent, such UN preventive soldiers should be backed by contingency plans and empowered to retaliate against aggressors. This would advance authorization for mandatory coercive action under Chapter VII (“Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression”) in the event that local forces challenge a preventive UN operation. The only example to date has been the symbolic deployment of a detachment of some one thousand blue helmets to Macedonia. Widely heralded (incorrectly in my view) as an important precedent for effective prevention, it is only effective so long as the Serbs do not call the international bluff.

Symbols are of limited utility, in the Balkans or anywhere else. Unlike states whose symbolic actions can deter aggression because they are backed by automatic military responses, the United Nations must rely upon Chapter VII to authorize one. Thomas Schelling long ago noted the need for escalation, and the effective threat of further use of force in order to deter a would-be aggressor by fear of “pain beyond endurance.”<sup>40</sup> Such coercive backup is not easy for the United Nations either politically or operationally. This is why it is absent in Macedonia. Beneath the rhetoric and posturing, no real line has been drawn in the sand for the Serbs. Without the ability or willingness to use force, if and when the bluff is called, the currency of UN action will be devalued to such an extent that the preventive action should not have been attempted in the first place.

The rub is obvious: Prevention is cost-effective in the long run, but cost-intensive in the short run. This is because the logic behind preventive action as an economic calculation is fundamentally flawed. As pundits and professors are fond of pointing out, democratically-elected governments rarely entertain policies whose time horizon extends beyond the next public opinion poll, and certainly not beyond the next electoral campaign. The highest elected representatives of major powers are obliged to exaggerate immediate expenditures (for their own administration) and discount future ones (for someone else's administration). Even if savings could be definitively calculated to be economically compelling (which they cannot), prevention is very risky in domestic political terms. Just a few body bags, let alone getting mired down in a protracted

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40. See THOMAS SCHELLING, *ARMS AND INFLUENCE* 63-66 (1966).

military operation, could mean political disaster. Devoting huge resources to humanitarian relief may not make much economic sense, but it is politically risk-free for elected officials. The proverbial bottom-line is that prevention is far more unattractive in practice than in theory.

Perhaps there is a hope of moving beyond such myopic mathematics in light of the growing obsession with saving public resources and the resulting shift in perspectives about time-frames. In the former Yugoslavia and in Haiti, the “long run” lasted almost four years, whereas in Rwanda it was reduced to a matter of weeks. The argument that an earlier use of force in the former Yugoslavia, rather than “collective spinelessness,”<sup>41</sup> would have been more economical confronts the inability of governments to look far ahead. The sorry record of Western dithering is a testimony to the tendency to magnify the disadvantages of immediate costs and to discount those in the future. The IFOR’s bill was some \$10 billion in 1996, along with a \$5 billion tab for urgent reconstruction.<sup>42</sup> This means that an extraordinarily expensive “future” is now being financed by the same members of the Western alliance who refused to pursue robust diplomacy or military action sooner. The U.S. approach in Haiti shows a similar pattern. Successive Republican and Democratic Administrations tolerated massive involuntary migration and human rights abuses before resorting to economic sanctions that, in fact, only served to penalize vulnerable populations and devastate the economy. Finally, Operation Uphold Democracy was deployed in September 1994, but at a cost to Washington of some \$1 billion followed by another \$350 million in assistance over the first six months.<sup>43</sup>

In Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of lives were lost before states were willing to act. It took the overnight creation in Goma of a Detroit-sized refugee city—complete with a cholera epidemic that killed 50,000 to 80,000 victims—before effective international military action was launched. Once again, the costs of half a million dead, over four million displaced persons, and a ruined economy were borne almost immediately by the same governments that had refused to intervene only a few weeks earlier. The United States and the European Union ended up providing at least \$1.4 billion in emergency aid in 1994 alone.<sup>44</sup> And the most disturbing part of such analyses is the knowledge that cases like Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia are not aberrations.

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41. See Thomas G. Weiss, *Collective Spinelessness: U.N. Action in the Former Yugoslavia*, in *THE WORLD AND YUGOSLAVIA’S WARS 59-96* (Richard H. Ullman ed., 1996).

42. These figures are based on newspaper accounts of U.S. contributions. According to a communication from NATO headquarters, “IFOR expenses for the forces are mainly funded by each contributing nation. . . . [T]he only way to come up with an overall figure is to ask one by one all the contributing nations.” E-mail to author dated Nov. 6, 1996.

43. See Robert Maguire, et al, *Haiti Held Hostage: International Responses to the Quest for Nationhood 1986-1996*, Occasional paper no. 23 (1996).

44. See LARRY MINEAR AND PHILIPPE GUILLOT, *SOLDIERS TO THE RESCUE: HUMANITARIAN LESSONS FROM RWANDA* (1996); GÉRARD PRUNIER, *THE RWANDA CRISIS: HISTORY OF A GENOCIDE* (1995); and JOINT EVALUATION OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO RWANDA, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Experience* (Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance To Rwanda, 1995).

A central and inescapable shortcoming of the call for UN preventive action in the military sphere is the UN's lack of capacity to plan, support, and command serious operations. The professional military wherewithal of the UN Secretariat is scarcely greater now than during the Cold War. This situation will not change in the foreseeable future, even though member states have agreed to some modest improvements to augment the UN Secretariat's anemic military expertise and intelligence capacities. These improvements include the round-the-clock situation room and satellite telephones. Member states have also attempted to move toward a modest new capacity to implement UN decisions in New York. The Canadian and Dutch have been joined by 22 other countries as "the friends of rapid reaction," who in mid-1996 officially proposed the establishment of a mobile military headquarters capable of fielding command teams within hours of a Security Council decision. When asked about the eventual implementation of the proposal, Boutros-Ghali welcomed it as fostering a "culture of prevention" because "rapid-deployment forces will give credibility to the political decision."<sup>45</sup> Although the existence of a rapid-reaction headquarters with mobile teams would perhaps be helpful in exercising a restraining effect on combatants, the real problem is the reluctance of states themselves to move their own troops quickly, and to authorize forces large enough to do the job. There is no evidence that states will empower the United Nations with the force necessary to contradict Michael Mandelbaum's judgment that "[t]he UN itself can no more conduct military operations on a large scale on its own than a trade association of hospitals can conduct heart surgery."<sup>46</sup>

In this context, we should recall that in 1993 the UN Secretary-General finally asked for 35,000 soldiers to protect the so-called safe areas in Bosnia. This request was not made in 1991 (to prevent the brief clash between Slovenia and Serbia, or the far more devastating Serbo-Croatian war in the Krajina), nor in 1992 (to prevent the carnage in Bosnia-Herzegovina). The 1993 appeal came in order to prevent even greater atrocities, and more ethnic cleansing. Nonetheless, it still took months to get barely 7,000 soldiers into the field, and they were totally ineffective in preventing the safe areas from being among the least safe places in the Balkans, and perhaps on earth.

When gruesome images appear in the media,<sup>47</sup> cost savings sometimes diminish in salience. There is evidence that wealthy Western countries are viscerally and ethically unable to ignore certain massive tragedies with their accompanying involuntary migration and economic disruption. To the extent that this is the case, perhaps economic considerations will foster more expedi-

45. Quoted by Barbara Crossette, *At the U. N., A Proposal To Speed Aid During Crises*, N.Y. TIMES, July 20, 1996 at A9.

46. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Reluctance to Intervene*, FOREIGN POLICY 95, Summer 1994, at 11.

47. For discussions of this phenomenon, see FROM MASSACRES TO GENOCIDE: THE MEDIA, PUBLIC POLICY, AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES (Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss eds., 1996); LARRY MINEAR, ET. AL., THE NEWS MEDIA, CIVIL WAR, AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION (1996); SOMALIA, RWANDA, AND BEYOND: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA IN WARS AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES (Edward Girardet ed., 1995), and NIK GOWING, REAL-TIME TELEVISION COVERAGE OF ARMED CONFLICTS AND DIPLOMATIC CRISES (1994).

tious interventions in some future cases. Earlier preventive military action may in some cases become more plausible than in the past; but, in all likelihood, only dramatic humanitarian suffering will dissipate Western apathy and desire to remain on the sidelines.

As part of his presentations in favor of prevention, former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali frequently cited a Chinese proverb, that ironically summarizes why prevention is a non-operational strategy: It is hard to get money for medicine but easy to get money for a coffin. Recent experiences are not any different from older ones in that things normally must get not only bad but even worse to catalyze international responses. The post-Cold War era has done nothing to alter the basic reality that states overcome policy and operational inertia only when their national interests are at stake; and very few cases of state collapse are perceived as involving significant stakes. It is ironic that prevention has become such a popular refrain in the last few years, considering that concrete efforts might have been more plausible during the Cold War than they are now. Then, both Western governments and their publics could at least be counted on to act quickly if there was a perceived threat that a nascent humanitarian crisis would benefit the Evil Empire of the East.

#### WHETHER PREVENTION?

The international community desperately requires a new strategy stressing proactive rather than reactive thinking. As we have seen, the situation is not totally bleak. The concept of preventive diplomacy has been advanced by the former UN Secretary-General and has received attention from a growing number of enthusiasts, as well as more detached observers on the international conference circuit.

"Prevention" has been added to the list of buzz-words in the contemporary public policy parlance, but the rationale for state decisionmaking remains unaltered. Dilatory reactions to Burundi's seething ethnic cauldron indicate that while international discourse has changed, the actual willingness to deploy troops preventively lags far behind the rhetoric. This impotence has helped revive the idea of an African Crisis Response Force in Autumn 1996. During a tour of African countries, then Secretary of State Warren Christopher proposed that the United States and some of its Western allies should help recruit, equip, train, and deploy troops. This all-African force of 5,000 to 10,000 soldiers would be designed to protect civilians and ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief. Yet, this public relations ploy by Washington to appear to be taking an initiative in Africa is unlikely to make African countries more altruistic about sending their troops than their Western counterparts.

Notwithstanding the huffing and puffing of the Security Council and of African heads of state who imposed economic sanctions on Burundi, some 150,000 deaths since October 1993—an average 100 per day—have been insufficient to persuade decisionmakers to act sooner rather than later. Given the relative size of its population to that of the United States, Burundi has been suffering for over three years from the equivalent of an Oklahoma City bombing

every hour. This leaves us with a final question: What exactly would constitute a crisis significant enough to unleash international preventive military action?

There is an oft-cited adage that the United Nations is only as strong as its member states wish it to be. In fact, there is a critical contradiction in the UN's dependence on western, in particular American, support at a time when major powers are increasingly unwilling to commit military forces to the pursuit of political objectives that are not directly linked to their own immediate national interests.<sup>48</sup> Prevention for them, and hence for the world organization, is a rhetorical incantation and not an operational reality.

We end where we began: Prevention is not only a serious intellectual challenge, but an even more serious political challenge. The concept of prevention should not be burdened with expectations that it cannot reasonably fulfill. Stephen Stedman caricatured prevention as a contemporary version of "alchemy."<sup>49</sup> This was unkind to fervent proponents, but apt. Indeed, we are still very much in the Middle Ages when it comes to preventing wars from breaking out or getting worse, and that probably explains why prevention has not yet been dismissed out of hand by serious policy analysts. Were we suddenly to move closer to the modern era, however, observers would realize that there is still no magic formula for prevention. Modesty is perhaps a good starting point for the post-post-Cold War era.

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48. See John Seaman, *The International System of Humanitarian Relief in the 'New World Order,'* in *THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION* at 17-31 (John Harriss ed., 1995).

49. Stephen John Stedman, *Alchemy for a New World Order: Overselling 'Preventive Diplomacy,'* *FOREIGN AFFAIRS* 74, no. 3, May/June 1995, at 14-20.