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**The United Nations at Fifty:
Its Role in Global Security**

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Foreword

The present study is based on a report from a conference held at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, England 2-4 December 1994. The Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies wishes to thank the Ditchely Foundation for allowing it to distribute this very timely assessment.

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The UN at Fifty: A Problem of Expectations

The conference on the United Nations' role in global security took place against the backdrop of events that highlighted all too clearly the need to reassess the possibilities and limitations of UN action in the field of international peace and security. As the conference met, the "Bihac crisis" - precipitated by the Bosnian Army's break-out from the Bihac enclave in late October and subsequent counter attacks by Bosnian and Croat Serb forces - continued unabated, bringing the UN under intense criticism from various quarters. The crisis over Bihac also brought into the open disagreements within the Alliance and among members of the Contact Group on Bosnia about the nature and modalities of NATO-UN cooperation. Outside Europe, uncertainty still surrounded UN plans to send a 7,000-strong peacekeeping force to Angola, while the imminent collapse of the "UN-blessed" regional peacekeeping efforts of the Economic Community of East African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia looked a distinct possibility. Shortly after the conference, it was announced that the second Security Council summit in the organisation's history, scheduled to be held in January 1995 to discuss the very subject of the UN's role in global security, had been cancelled. The reason given was the lack of agreement about the agenda.

Although conference participants expressed different views about the best way forward, there was a measure of underlying agreement regarding the organisation's current predicament. Three general issues stood out.

First, it was generally acknowledged that while the UN's role in international security is no longer at the mercy of Cold War rivalry, conflicts of values and interest among states persist. These derive in part from different historical experiences and account for the failure of the UN to define a "post-Cold War international order", the basis and legitimacy of which command universal assent. It was noted by some, for example, that the particular interests of developing or "non-western" countries have not been adequately reflected in discussions about the UN's role in international relations after

the Cold War. Specifically, many of these countries have expressed profound concern about what they see as an obvious tension between the new-found activism of the UN with regard to internal conflicts and the cardinal principle of international society, namely, the sovereign equality of states and its corollary that there is a duty of non-intervention by states in the internal affairs of other states. Thus, all too often, the UN was misleadingly presented in the media as the public service institution of an "international community" which did not in fact exist.

While none of this amounted to surprise revelations for conference participants, it was pointed out that their deeper implications had been ignored in much of the public and professional debate about the UN in recent years. Specifically, in the "new world order" debate about the UN's potential role in international security following the Gulf War, "the inherent problems of multilateralism" had been neglected. With obvious reference to the ongoing conflict in Bosnia, it was noted that agreement on specific Security Council resolutions did not signify agreement, let alone a determination to address, the underlying problems of conflict. Similarly, it should not necessarily be assumed that the "veto free world" we have become used to will continue indefinitely.

The second issue on which there was general agreement was closely linked to the above considerations: a gap has developed between the expectations placed on the UN and what it can realistically hope to achieve given the paucity of political will and resources at its disposal. The resulting crisis of credibility was most evident in the "disconnect" that often existed between Security Council mandates and reality on the ground in current peacekeeping operations. In the specific case of the former Yugoslavia, the problem was evident in the proliferation of Security Council resolutions (now more than sixty) and the successive enlargements of the original mandate. Several of these resolutions were simply non-deliverable and some were even at odds with one another. The problem of expectations has become particularly acute with regard to intrastate conflicts driven by religious, communal and historical antagonisms often

brought about by the break-up or collapse of state authority. To a greater extent than ever before in its fifty years history, the UN has become involved in sub-state conflicts, even though several participants agreed that these kinds of conflicts were less amenable to external manipulation than had been assumed only two or three years ago.

The third issue on which there was broad agreement was that the UN was not the only, let alone always the preferred, instrument for preventing, containing or mitigating conflict. The UN is clearly not the only moral or legal force in international affairs to which states can turn. Chapter VIII of the Charter allows for "regional arrangements or agencies" to deal with "such matters relating to the maintenance of peace and security as are appropriate for regional action". Moreover, the inherent political and operational constraints on UN action also suggest that ad hoc "coalitions of the willing" might be a better alternative to UN-led actions, especially in cases where enforcement is being considered.

The conference approached these subjects in three working groups. The first group explored the questions raised by the changing nature of UN peacekeeping in recent years, focusing in particular on the issues of objectives, conditions and limitations. The second group was concerned with the UN's overall ability to mount, launch and sustain exceedingly complex operations. In part, this involved a discussion of the instruments at the UN's disposal and the attempts to overcome or mitigate the problems of command and control, training and finance. It also required, however, a discussion of the problems of political control and possible regional alternatives to UN action. The third group examined the UN's role in conflict avoidance in the broadest sense, ranging from the direct contribution that could be made by the Secretary General, various UN bodies and specialised agencies, to long term confidence-building measures, including arms control and disarmament initiatives.

Inevitably, there was much overlap between the groups and several key issues surfaced in different contexts. These included: objectives and criteria for UN involvement in peacekeeping; the potential

and limitations of regional organisations and the delegation of enforcement tasks to UN-blessed "coalitions of the willing"; the role of the Secretary-General and his immediate circle of advisers; and the desirability or otherwise of establishing some kind of UN rapid deployment capability. The advantages and disadvantages of activating the military articles of the Charter (especially the question of revitalising the Military Staff Committee), was also discussed in more than one group.

I. The Changing Context of Peacekeeping

The theory and practice of UN peacekeeping evolved as a distinctive form of third-party intervention aimed, in most cases, at overseeing an agreed ceasefire. The deployment of lightly armed troops drawn from various nations was to act as a disincentive to the renewal of violent conflict. Although so-called "classical" peacekeeping usually involved more than simply patrolling a "blue line in the desert", peacekeepers still relied fundamentally on the consent of the parties. Maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of an operation meant that the impartiality of a peacekeeping force had to be preserved in relation to the disputants.

An obvious starting point for the discussion of tasks and objectives was the changing context of peacekeeping in recent years and the difficulty, as several participants noted, of using the term "peacekeeping" to describe today's multifaceted and complex missions. The UN's increasing involvement in the mitigation of conflicts within states - conflicts usually driven by deep-seated animosities and hatreds - has meant that the operational environment in which forces are deployed has become far more fluid and violent. This is in contrast to most UN field operations before 1988 which, with the important exceptions of ONUC in Congo and UNIFIL in South Lebanon, were carried out under relatively stable and benign conditions. In many contemporary cases of UN involvement, neither "front lines" nor legitimate political authorities can be identified in the

mission area. Under such circumstances, peacekeepers have often been forced to operate with only partial consent from the parties on the ground. It was also stressed by some participants that although warring factions may not be very sophisticated in terms of operational concepts and tactics, they were often in possession of advanced "first world" military equipment. As a result, peacekeeping forces now faced greater risks and were much more likely to sustain casualties than ever before (by 10 December 1994, UNPROFOR alone had sustained 130 fatalities). This in turn required that peacekeeping forces, in order to be effective, had to be drawn from countries capable of adequate force protection, logistic mobility and in possession of some kind of intelligence capability.

Against this background, it was argued that the very use of the term "peacekeeping" in places such as the former Yugoslavia only served to reinforce already unrealistic expectations. Just as the term UN Protection Force misleadingly described the UN's actual role in the former Yugoslavia, so the term "peacekeeping" was inappropriate to describe a situation where there was no peace to keep. It was suggested that a useful distinction, albeit in some ways still unsatisfactory, should be drawn between humanitarian assistance, electoral support and peacekeeping. In the former Yugoslavia, UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia was very different from that in Bosnia where its principal task was to support the activities of the UNHCR, the "lead agency".

There was, however, broad agreement on one fundamental point: although the term "peacekeeping" was in some ways unsatisfactory and recent experience had exposed glaring deficiencies in the management of UN operations, this did not in itself suggest that the essential characteristics of traditional peacekeeping - consent, impartiality and its non-threatening character - were of no relevance for contemporary operations. Above all, it was widely accepted that the fundamental distinction between peacekeeping and enforcement had to be maintained and that the tendency to blur these two very different kinds of activity in one operation had to be firmly resisted. Indeed, this kind of

confusion had been the principal source of the débâcle in Somalia where the excessive use of force in the summer and autumn of 1993 had drawn UNOSOM II's (and especially US) forces directly into combat with warring factions. The consequent loss of impartiality had destabilised the overall environment to such an extent that, in the end, only two policy options were left: escalation or withdrawal. The public mood in the US was such that withdrawal from Somalia, well before any of the stated objectives of the UN operation had been met, became inevitable.

The basic objective of any peacekeeping force, then, must be to assist and reinforce a broader political process towards the effective containment and, ultimately, resolution of a conflict. Increasingly, however, this has come to involve peacekeepers in a range of different activities including inter alia: ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance to beleaguered populations (in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia); human rights monitoring in Central America and Cambodia; the disarmament and demobilisation of armed factions as envisaged in the peace plans for Angola, Mozambique and Cambodia, and the preventive deployment of forces as in Macedonia. As with traditional peacekeeping, however, these "wider" tasks cannot be advanced by coercive means. Instead, they rely on local support, sustained and encouraged by the impartial character of UN activities. Although several participants argued that consent in conditions of near civil war can never be absolute, others stressed that it is the promotion of consent - by adhering to the principles of minimum force, constant liaison and negotiation with local parties - which continues to distinguish peacekeeping from enforcement, the objective of which is to impose a solution by coercive means.

It was also emphasised by several participants, however, that the involvement of peacekeepers in humanitarian support activities (even though these did not envisage enforcement action) did pose problems of its own. Specifically, humanitarian operations in the midst of an ongoing war tended to become politicised and manipulated by all parties, as events in Bosnia had amply demonstrated.

Several participants argued that the experience over the past two years, especially in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, indicated that the requirement of consent in UN operations should be reinstated more forcefully.

Objectives and Criteria: The Basis of UN Involvement

The intractability of some of the problems facing the UN and the organisational and financial strains placed on the organisation in recent years, generated a wide-ranging discussion about the possibility of establishing a set of criteria for UN involvement. At present, the UN was patently over-extended and its credibility was suffering as a result. For it to be restored, it was observed, it was not only the number of operations that had to be scaled down; the justifications and purposes of peacekeeping had to be limited. It was also widely felt that the mandate given to a peacekeeping force should not merely reflect the political aspirations and moral indignation of member states; it also had to be capable of translation into effective action on the ground.

In view of this, it was suggested that the UN should perhaps "learn to say no" and that it should do so against a "checklist" of criteria. Similarly, the UN should be prepared to terminate an operation or scale down a mission if it was clearly not advancing the objectives set for it at the outset.

Many participants, however, warned against the temptation to enumerate criteria and conditions in advance. Two obvious difficulties were stressed. First, although a set of criteria might perhaps be desirable in the abstract, when applied to a range of different circumstances, they tended either to be too narrow or far too loose. Second, although the UN was over-extended, saying "flat no" was much more difficult in reality than was commonly assumed. In part, this was because the political imperative for the Security Council to act was still considerable, even though the outcome of an operation (or the viability of a particular ceasefire agreement) was often difficult to ascertain in advance. Furthermore, the UN could not be seen to

differentiate between requests from member states.

Much of the discussion about the problems of elaborating and applying criteria for participation in UN operations, took as its point of reference current US policy on peacekeeping. This policy has been formally codified in Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25). PDD 25, itself the outcome of a lengthy process of discussion and inter-agency review, sets forth a series of conditions for US support of and participation in UN field operations. Two of these were found by several participants to be particularly problematic:

- ♦ the objectives of a peacekeeping operation have to be in "America's own national interest" and assured of "continuing public and Congressional support",
- ♦ the commitment of US troops cannot be "open-ended" and consequently an "exit strategy" must be in place before troops are deployed.

A brief survey of contemporary intrastate conflicts illustrates the inherent difficulties of applying these criteria. A narrow definition of "national interest" and the insistence on "no open-ended commitments" appear to rule out most of the cases which the UN and regional organisations have been called upon to address in recent years (and are likely to be called upon to address in the future). In addition to "national interests", which would always remain the responsibility of individual governments to define and pursue, a notion of "collective" or "international" interests had to be embraced. Several participants noted that the outcome of recent Congressional elections and the general mood of introspection ensured that the requirement of "continuing public support" was also bound to limit the scope for future US involvement. Indeed, it was observed with some irony that the deployment of US troops in a preventive mode in Macedonia would not have taken place if the criteria now enshrined in PDD 25 had been applied at the time.

Similarly, to announce an "exit date" in advance was simply to invite those elements who wished to frustrate an operation and resume

fighting to "lie low" until a peacekeeping force had left (an "exit date", it should be added, is not necessarily entailed by an "exit strategy").

II. Instruments and Organisation for Peacekeeping

In 1987 some 10,000 military personnel were involved in 5 UN operations. By early 1994, the UN was running 17 operations and deploying about 72,000 military and police personnel. This dramatic increase in the number and, equally importantly, the multifaceted character of UN field operations, have placed a considerable strain on the ability of the organisation effectively to launch and sustain operations. Added to this, many of the self-imposed limitations that have historically characterised UN operations - including the lack of proper planning, inefficient financial and procurement regulations, and restrictions on the collection and use of intelligence - have further compounded the problems of peacekeeping management.

In spite of these challenges, several participants stressed that significant improvements had been made within the Secretariat, especially over the past two years, and that these should be both acknowledged and welcomed as steps in the right direction. In particular, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), formally responsible for the "day-to-day executive direction of all peacekeeping operations", has been significantly upgraded. Some of the specific steps taken to strengthen the DPKO include: a considerable expansion of staffing levels; the creation of a Planning Division under a new Office of Planning and Support; and the establishment of the Situation Centre. The Situation Centre, originally set up to support activities in Somalia, has since been upgraded and now operates round the clock in accordance with proper staff procedures. It acts as a communication channel between the headquarters in New York and missions in the field, while also providing a mechanism whereby information is disseminated within the Secretariat and to troop contributing countries. In order to improve the UN headquarters' capability to monitor and support

missions, measures have also been taken to increase the flow of information to the UN from member states (for this purpose the US has donated an information/intelligence processing system in the DPKO). Although the UN's capacities for collection and dissemination of information require further development, the creation of the Situation Centre (with an embryonic research and analysis capability) does represent a major step forward (not least psychologically for the UN). A more flexible attitude within the UN to the issues of "intelligence" is also discernible.

But perhaps most encouragingly, the UN has strengthened its pre-deployment planning capacity and has finally incorporated the Field Operations Division (formerly located within the Department of Administration and Management) into the Office of Planning and Support (DPKO). In theory, this should allow for integrated planning, especially important in the area of logistics. Indeed, the new peacekeeping mission for Angola (UNAVEM III), if it goes ahead, will be the first operation that will have been properly planned by a military-civilian staff in New York before the Security Council takes the final decision on deployment.

Another commendable development has been the creation of a Stand-By Planning Group which over the past 2 years has worked hard to define military requirements for future operations and to elicit commitments from member states for units which, in principle, could be called upon at short notice to participate in UN operations.

Although the process of vertical integration within the DPKO has been successful, it was pointed out by some participants that horizontal integration across departmental boundaries was less than satisfactory. In part this stemmed from the somewhat artificial delineation of bureaucratic functions and responsibilities between departments within the Secretariat. It is, for example, impossible in practice to insist that the DPKO should only be responsible for the "operational" side of a peacekeeping mission, while the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) should deal only with the "political" side, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) only with "humanitarian" issues. By definition, contemporary operations

encompass overlapping political, operational and humanitarian aspects. A further complicating factor, however, has been the role of the Secretary General who, it was felt by some, had not done enough to integrate the various departments, offices and division engaged in field operations. Instead, the Secretary General has strengthened his own Executive Office at the expense, according to some participants, of integration and closer coordination among substantive departments (see below).

In spite of this, participants felt that the achievements of the Secretariat needed greater recognition and that the problems that continued to exist might eventually be overcome.

Although the attempts to strengthen the ability of the UN headquarters in New York to engage in mission support, force generation and planning was broadly welcomed, some participants stressed that New York should not seek to become an operational headquarters in the strict military sense. On the contrary, it was felt that the exercise of command functions should be clearly delegated to the Special Representative and Force Commander in the field. Although there could be no question of undermining strategic direction and political control from the Security Council in New York, greater financial, administrative and operational authority to the field would enhance military effectiveness.

The discussion of the problems that continue to bedevil UN forces in the field - including issues of logistics planning and support; command, control, coordination and intelligence (C3I); tactical mobility and procurement - also pointed to the need for improving "mission support" from New York while vesting "mission command" firmly with commander in the field. Finally, the vital importance of proper training with an emphasis on the multinational and multicultural nature of UN operations, was emphasised.

Revitalising the Military Staff Committee?

In more than one context, the potential role of the now moribund Military Staff Committee (MSC)

was discussed. Article 47 of the Charter describes the MSC, consisting of the "Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council or their representatives", as a body that will "advise and assist the Security Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security". The MSC was never activated in the manner originally envisaged, though it has frequently surfaced in discussions about strengthening the UN's capacity to undertake and direct military operations. Indeed, both France and the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev put forward proposals in the General Assembly calling for its reactivation.

Among those participants advocating the need for some kind of rapid response capability to be developed (see below), the MSC was viewed as a natural body that could be charged with overseeing its activities. Others pointed out that although the MSC should not be resurrected for the operational purpose of providing "strategic direction for forces put at the disposal of the Security Council" (Article 47), it might nonetheless be useful as a body that can provide much-needed military advice for the Secretariat and the Secretary General. It was suggested, for example, that if high-level expert advice had been available at the time, the inherent military difficulties and long-term consequences of the "safe areas" deployment in Bosnia in 1993 might have been pointed out.

The idea of revitalising the MSC, however, also poses several problems. One of these is that its reactivation would appear to strengthen the influence of the permanent members of the Security Council at a time when the very structure and legitimacy of the Council is coming under increasing scrutiny. Many non-Western members would undoubtedly see the reactivation of the MSC as an attempt to perpetuate and indeed reinforce existing inequities in the UN system. Moreover, there was always the danger that the divisions and political differences that existed on the Security Council would resurface in a revitalised MSC. As was pointed out, there was no shortage of "expert" military advice over the issue of establishing "safe areas" in Bosnia. In fact, the Secretariat did obtain

a detailed assessment from the Force Commander in the field. Thus, the decision to pass Resolution 836 clearly reflected considerations other than purely military ones.

Finally, it was also felt by some that although military expertise for the UN was needed, this should be concentrated in the DPKO; activating the MSC would only add a parallel and competing bureaucracy.

The UN's Financial Predicament

The UN's financial difficulties have long been a subject of concern. The present state of affairs is, however, particularly serious as the financial situation is impacting ever more directly on operational activities. At the same time, arrears continue to accumulate whilst the remedial measures proposed by member states and advisory bodies have either not been acted upon or have failed to produce the desired results. For example, the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund of \$150 million created in December 1992 has already been depleted while no satisfactory mechanism for reimbursing troop-contributing countries has been agreed.

It was observed that the most immediate problem of financing peacekeeping operations stems from the nature of the UN budgetary process itself. Specifically, as long as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the General Assembly (ACABQ) reviews the initial budget for a mission, expenditure may not exceed a \$3 million annual limit on the Secretary General's "unforeseen and extraordinary" spending authority. Once the budget has been approved by the ACABQ, services and equipment can be contracted for up to \$10 million until the Fifth Committee (Budget) of the General Assembly approves the budget. Combined with an exceedingly complex procurement system, this slow and cumbersome process has helped generate major delays in the deployment of UN personnel. Several participants noted that an important aspect of the problem of financial support has been the failure of the UN to delegate sufficient financial and admin-

istrative authority from New York to the field mission.

Although, it was generally acknowledged that these problems needed to be addressed, some participants expressed uneasiness about the ability of the UN to "put its own house in order", citing instances of corruption and of financial mismanagement. It was also argued that certain countries, notably the US, were paying an inordinate share of the overall peacekeeping budget (ca. 31%), while other countries certainly had the means to pay more and should be encouraged to do so. Saudi Arabia (which pays 0.192% on the 1992 peacekeeping assessment scale) was cited as a case in point. A more equitable distribution of payment was also seen as a necessary prerequisite for the US administration to be able to rebuild Congressional support for other initiatives aimed at strengthening the organisation.

III. Conflict Avoidance and Preventive Measures

The need to respond early and flexibly to signs of potential conflict, preferably before a crisis erupts into violence, is an uncontroversial proposition, and several participants emphasised the need for the UN to become much more "pro-active" in the field of peace and security. The preventive deployment of UN peacekeepers in Macedonia was one initiative whose potential value in other circumstances should be explored further. Other initiatives that had in the past come to nought - notably the creation in 1988 of the Office of Research and Collection of Information (ORCI) in order to provide warning and analysis of emerging crisis for the Secretary General - ought perhaps to be revisited. Indeed, the importance of improving the early warning capacities of the UN was brought up repeatedly in different contexts. In particular, there was a need to ensure that the information gathered and stored by Specialised Agencies and NGOs was filtered through to the Secretary-General in an effective manner, while at the same time, the Secretariat developed its own a political-analytical capability.

As was noted during the conference, however, "preventive action" was also one of those frequently used concepts which turned out to be more problematic in practice than in the abstract. Three points were stressed.

First, the lack of adequate warning is in fact rarely a problem. As one participant observed, the war in the former Yugoslavia was perhaps one of the most widely predicted conflicts at the end of the twentieth century. Similarly, there is no shortage of indicators suggesting that "early" attention should now be given to, say, Burundi, Zaïre and Sudan. The central problem, it would seem, is that awareness of a potential crisis does not automatically translate into agreement as to how it should be addressed. All too often, the interests of states differ with respect to a conflict, making concerted action and a consistent policy difficult to pursue. More generally, it was also observed that "early warning" or good intelligence does not in itself necessarily mean better decisions.

Second, it has proved difficult for many governments - particularly in democracies where re-election is fought on the strength of what has been achieved in office - to commit resources and stake political capital on something which might or might not happen. The above discussion of the "action" criteria enshrined in PDD 25 highlighted this particular problem.

Third, the particular form which a "preventive measure" assumes must be carefully considered as its consequences are often difficult to calculate. For example, a preventive deployment of UN troops along one side of a disputed border must take account of the effect this might have on the perceived impartiality of a UN force. Indeed, under certain circumstances, such a deployment may give the impression that the UN is taking sides in a conflict and thus destabilise a peacekeeping environment rather than increase overall confidence. Similarly, the appointment of special representatives or envoys to lead or take part in preventive diplomacy missions must take full account of the particular background and experience which an appointee brings to his post (in making this point, several participants implicitly criticised some of the choices made by the Secre-

tary General in recent years).

More generally, it was stressed that a truly meaningful discussion of "conflict avoidance" had to be more broadly focused and take a long term view. In this context, preventive "measures" was preferable to the term "preventive diplomacy" as the latter appeared to exclude socio-economic and structural sources of conflict. Confidence-building measures and initiatives such as the UN Conventional Arms Register focused on long term problems, and these had to be addressed.

The Role of Secretary General and the Security Council

Under Article 99 of the Charter, the Secretary General "may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security". It was generally agreed that the Secretary General had a potentially unique role to play in the field of conflict avoidance and that his support machinery for conflict prevention should be strengthened. It was argued, however, that the authority and "good offices" of the Secretary General tended to be more effective before an issue reached the level of the Security Council. Partly for this reason, the Secretary General should be encouraged and indeed empowered to be more active at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. Although the Secretary General must continue to inform and, when necessary, consult with the Security Council, the council itself should be kept "in reserve" until its involvement is warranted by the gravity of a situation.

An important reason for this is that the Security Council is a blunt instrument and issues tend to become polarised before it, something which in turn limits the room for manoeuvre and narrows the range of policy options. It was also stressed that while the capacity to engage in "quiet diplomacy" ought to be enhanced, the impartiality of the Secretary General's position had to be carefully guarded.

An important step in the direction of strengthening the role of the Secretary General in the area

of conflict avoidance would be for him to make wider use of panels of experts. These should be drawn, if necessary, from outside the organisation. Similarly, greater use could also be made of "eminent persons" and special envoys. In this context, however, it was observed that the Secretariat had not taken up a recent French-British offer in which lists of experts who could be used on preventative diplomacy missions had been provided to the Secretary General.

An additional and equally important step is to coordinate properly the activities of existing bodies inside and outside the UN system that can contribute towards conflict avoidance. In particular, it was observed that the relationship between the Secretary-General and the Specialised Agencies needs to be reviewed so as to ensure that information was fed into the Secretary General's office on a regularised basis. A problem here, it was acknowledged, was that specialised agencies are answerable to their governing bodies and that no formal channel or mechanism for coordination with the Secretary-General actually exists. While "grand coordination meetings" provide no solution to the problems of coordination, the Secretary-General ought perhaps to be allowed to act more as a *primus inter pares* in relation to the agencies.

In discussing the role of the Secretary General, much emphasis was placed on the need for flexibility. Several participants noted that in the recent past such flexibility had been admirably facilitated by the use of so-called "friends groups" (consisting of representatives of various member states). In the cases of Cambodia, El Salvador and Haiti, these had turned out to be well suited for carrying out various conflict mediation tasks. The creation of groups of concerned and "friendly" states should, where appropriate, be encouraged further by the Secretary General who should seek to make them as inclusive as possible.

It proved difficult throughout the conference, as indeed is the case in "real" life, to separate the discussion of the role of the Secretary-General from the issue of the personality and management style of the office holder. This was equally true with regard to the appointment of various Special Representatives of the Secretary General. On some

occasions in the past, these appointments had turned out to be unfortunate. With regard to the current Secretary General some unease was expressed about the tendency to strengthen the role of his immediate circle of advisors in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) at the expense, it was argued, of efforts to integrate the activities of key departments. Over the past year, both geographical and functional responsibilities have been accorded to three senior officials in the EOSG. This has resulted in a "top-heavy" structure in New York, and has effectively created, if not a layer between the Secretary-General and the substantive departments of the Secretariat, then at least greater distance between them.

The very centrality of the Secretary-General to the work of the organisation led several participants to suggest that the process whereby he is chosen (described by some as downright "farical") should be reviewed.

The Contribution of Regional Organisations

In August 1994 the UN Secretary General held the first formal meeting in New York with representatives of 10 regional organisations and bodies in order to explore how closer cooperation could be effected in the future. The obvious strains which the expansion of peacekeeping operations have placed on the capacities of the UN, as well as the pressure for additional commitments in other parts of the world (most notably in Africa) do indeed suggest that delegating peacekeeping and conflict avoidance tasks more broadly to regional bodies merits further consideration. It was pointed out that these need not be organisations in the strict technical sense, but may (as the Charter itself allows for) be "arrangements" or looser groupings of member states. It was also felt by some participants that regional groupings and initiatives may be most effective at the lower or lighter end of the spectrum of conflict, engaged in various monitoring, mediation and "good offices" functions. The activities of the CSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities and the various Rapporteur and Fact-

Finding Missions established by the CSCE in recent years, were held out as positive examples.

Nonetheless, important limitations on the contribution which regional organisations can make, specifically to UN peacekeeping, remain. In the first place, most regional organisations (with the obvious exception of NATO) are weaker both institutionally and financially than the UN. The Organisation of African Unity, for example, is severely constrained financially (as indeed turned out to be the case when it sent a peacekeeping force to Chad in the early 1980s). But perhaps the most serious problem with regionally-based initiatives, is the fact that proximity to a conflict - paradoxically, the supposed strength of regional organisations - is also frequently their principal liability. This is because regional organisations, especially if they include among their members a regional hegemon, tend to interject local or regional politics into the area where they are deployed. One of the clearest examples of this in recent years has been the ECOWAS force in Liberia which, although blessed by the UN, is widely perceived by warring factions and neighbouring states as an instrument of Nigerian foreign policy. The experience of Russian-led CIS "peacekeeping" in parts of the former Soviet Union, highlights the problem of impartiality and legitimacy even more starkly.

The reference to Russian "peacekeeping" practice generated an interesting discussion about what several participants saw as a process of de facto regionalisation taking place into different "peacekeeping spheres of influence". American action in Haiti, Russian-style peacekeeping in the near-abroad and French policy in parts of Africa, all appeared to suggest a pattern of unilateral action whose tacit formalisation might result in a "modified notion of spheres of influence". The political, financial and operational pressures pushing this development were recognised, but considerable concern was expressed about its broader ramifications. Not only could it be used to legitimise dubious policies and activities on the part of major powers, it would also exclude certain parts of the world from consideration.

"Coalitions of the Willing"

The weaknesses of most regional organisations and the difficulties encountered by the UN in mounting and sustaining military operations, led many participants to argue that the use of ad hoc coalitions should be explored more systematically. Indeed, when the challenge was one of large-scale enforcement, participants broadly agreed that the UN should authorise the use of force to a "coalition of the willing" (as it did to US-led coalitions in Korea in 1950, the Gulf in 1990, and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992). The delegation of enforcement tasks was both inevitable and desirable. It was desirable in the sense that the commitment of coalition partners to "stay the course" would presumably not be subject to the vagrancies of "soft" political will. Moreover, such coalitions were unlikely to suffer from the problem of limited resources and inadequate capabilities (especially as the US was likely to be involved). Nor would it suffer from the kind of command and control problems endemic to all UN-led operations. Indeed, as was pointed out, the ability of the Secretariat to provide executive direction for large-scale operations continues to be severely limited.

Nonetheless, UN-blessed "coalitions of the willing" also presented certain problems. Perhaps the most significant of these was that of legitimacy and political control. If the activities of a coalition were indeed in support of UN resolutions, the question of its wider legitimacy needed to be addressed. Some participants argued that one role for a revitalised MSC might be to ensure that a measure of political control was exercised by the UN over operations. In response to this, however, others argued strongly that if major military operations were being conducted, there could be no question of UN "oversight". Interference in the planning and conduct of operations would simply not be allowed.

It was generally acknowledged that there was always likely to be some tension between the requirements of legitimacy and efficiency, and it was noted that the tension between these two requirements was also at the heart of the broader issue of Security Council reform. In this connec-

tion it was argued that if agreement (on the issue of reform and the question of when Security Council action should be taken) could not be reached on the basis of substantive criteria, it became all the more important to reach some agreement on procedural criteria.

A further problem that was identified concerned the "handing over" of an operation from a coalition or a state to a UN force. The transition from the US-led UNITAF operation (Restore Hope) to UNOSOM II in Somalia in 1993 illustrated the problem. Not only was this process far from smooth; it was never properly completed as the US effectively "hijacked" the operation in the summer of 1993 once the casualty rate among UN troops began to rise. As a result, the UN exercised little command and hardly any control over the actions of various contingents in Somalia.

A UN Rapid Deployment Force?

Although participants clearly differed in their views as to the general desirability of establishing a standing UN force, the discussion was not as divisive nor were opinions as divided as might perhaps have been expected. An important reason for this was that no one was arguing for the creation of a separately constituted force capable of large-scale enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter. Instead, what was put forward was the idea of a much more modest "humanitarian police force" consisting of a cadre of highly trained, immediately available, civilian and police officials that could be deployed on short notice to form the nucleus of a larger force. In addition to this, such a force might be trained and equipped to carry out limited tasks including the protection of relief supplies and the maintenance of order in refugee camps. The key rationale for establishing such a force would be to provide a rapid response capability to stabilise a tense or deteriorating situation. Above all, it would help to reduce the substantial delays in the deployment of forces that have plagued all recent peacekeeping operations. In the former Yugoslavia, the first units arrived in March 1992 though it was not until July-August

that the entire force of military and civilian staff had been deployed, by which time the situation on the ground had changed dramatically. Similarly, in Cambodia it took nearly eight months for UNTAC to complete its deployment.

It was noted by some participants that the Stand-By Force initiative, to which more than 30 countries have now formally committed themselves, already offered a means of reducing the lag in deployment time. As was pointed out, however, when the Secretariat activated the Stand-By system earlier this year in response to the situation in Rwanda, not a single member state approached was prepared to offer troops for an operation. In this particular case, the Stand-By system worked as a mechanism for rapid negative responses, not force generation.

Nonetheless, it was pointed out that a distinction should perhaps be drawn between issue of "rapid deployment" and a "rapid deployment force". One could, for example, ensure a rapid response by putting in specialist units (eg. logistics, communications, engineering and a rudimentary HQ element) drawn from a few countries, if these were given a guarantee that they would be able to take their troops out again quickly. The recruitment and financing of a Rapid Deployment Force were also seen by many to be problematic, as was the issue of deciding between competing claims for its deployment. Nonetheless, there was broad agreement that the need to respond early was vital and that the current lag in deployment was unacceptable.

Conclusions

Although the conference overall struck a cautionary note - stressing the need to bring expectations in line with reality, while recognising that some of the problems facing the organisation simply cannot be solved with the existing resources and the tenuous nature of the political commitment demonstrated by key member states - it was argued that one ought not to be too gloomy. A historical perspective had to be introduced and if the expectations of 1991-92 had been too optimistic, the

current pessimism conveyed by the media was perhaps excessive. Moreover, for all its problems, the UN had some notable achievements to its credit: its involvement in the transition process from South African rule to independence in Namibia, its contribution to the peace process in Central America, the successful holding of elections in Cambodia and Mozambique. Even in terms of improving its own management structures and institutional capacities for peacekeeping, considerable progress has been made over the past two years. Moreover, many participants echoed Conor Cruise O'Brien's view that the UN had always been there to perform an unstated task: taking the blame for the mistakes of governments and acting as a "scapegoat" when this was required. Whether or not this is a healthy role for the organisation in the long run, there was general agreement that the difficulties over the past three years could not be attributed solely to the failure of the UN as an institution to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Although the pace and progress of UN reform did leave considerable room for improvement, the personalities involved and the competing interests and values of states would always impact upon the effectiveness of the organisation, especially in the realm of international peace and security. Partly for these reasons, several participants expressed scepticism about viewing the UN as an agent for change. Perhaps a more modest but no less honourable approach would be to concentrate and build on the proven assets of the organisation and utilise these as a means of managing change by peaceful processes.