PEACE BUILDING AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY: AUSTRALIAN INITIATIVES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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[The end of the Cold War did not bring with it the end to international conflicts, as many people expected it to do. Instability and conflict within nation-states has caused particular difficulties. This has highlighted new issues regarding the United Nations' role in achieving and maintaining international peace and security. 'Cooperative security' has recently been propounded as an appropriate approach to contemporary peace and security issues. Here, this concept and the central elements of this approach — peace building and preventive diplomacy — are described, and Australia's role in promoting international peace and security through the United Nations Organisation, as well as through regional organisations, is detailed.]

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War was an immense relief to those of us who lived our entire lives up until then with the threat of nuclear war hanging over us. A lifetime of anxiety lifted momentarily when the Berlin Wall was pulled down; I remember naïvely pondering the redundancy packages which might be handed out to the staff of the various Peace Institutes around the world. Sadly, we now know that the gridlock the superpowers had on the world kept a large number of conflicts either suppressed or contained. The capacity of the United States and the Soviet Union between them to lock in a very large number of client countries, which were dominated and directed by the respective superpowers, disappeared with the loosening of the gridlock.

Instead of chasing new jobs, those Peace Institute staff have been grappling with the new set of security problems that has emerged. A characteristic of these new problems is that they overwhelmingly involve intra-state conflict, rather than conflict between states. The statistics are remarkable. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which provides valuable analyses of conflicts throughout the world, has reported that 79 of the 82 armed conflicts which occurred around the world between 1989 and 1992 were conflicts within states.[1] In 1993, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 34 major armed conflicts were waged in 28 locations around the world. All of these were intra-state conflicts.[2] 1993 has the dubious honour of being the first year in which conflicts over autonomy or independence markedly

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[1] UN Development Program, *Human Development Report* (1994) 47.
[2] Ibid 81.

outnumbered those concerning the type of political system or government composition.[3]

The UN Secretary-General recently referred to the Cold War having masked or prevented some 30 small wars, most within states, with which the international community is now confronted.[4] There is an evident 'zone of conflict', including the former communist states, much of Africa and parts of Central and Latin America and South Asia, where too many states — caught in a downward spiral of economic decline, often exacerbated by official corruption and mismanagement, creating unstable governments — are being challenged, often violently, by their own citizens. Economic decline has hastened the process of national disintegration, and vice versa.

In states where economically and politically bankrupt governments can no longer provide vital social and economic services, citizens have increasingly been turning to other religious, ethnic and private economic organisations. Ethnic and religious differences are usually not in themselves the causes of conflict, but they are easily capable of being exploited by unscrupulous political leaders. The available evidence strongly suggests that violent intra-state conflict is unlikely to decrease of its own accord in the near or mid-term future.

Dealing with the resurgence of ethno-nationalism is one of the greatest difficulties that we now confront. In addition, there are still all the old, unhappily-familiar problems of natural disasters — such as drought, earthquakes and typhoons — which can place enormous stresses and strains on particular states whose infrastructures are insufficiently developed. These can, along with other more human factors, lead to the creation of the kind of broken-back states that create yet another kind of security issue with which the international community has to deal.

Confronted with this kind of reality, there is an acute need for the international community to think thoughtfully and creatively about how to respond. And it *is* a matter for the international community. The handling of this kind of situation is not something that can be left to individual great and powerful states. Even countries like the United States simply cannot summon the will to play that role. Not least, this is because of the reaction of domestic constituencies, which argue that their country should not be caught up in dealing with other people's problems. If these problems are to be addressed other than by neglect, then there has to be a genuinely multilateral, international response.

Although there are a number of regional organisations that come into play when developing responses of this kind, the overwhelming responsibility to act falls on the United Nations. It is the only organisation with effectively universal membership among the nations of the world, and the only organisation with the

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[3] Ibid 81-2.
[4] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, UN Doc A/50/60, S/1995/1 (1995) paras 8-11

formal capacity in its Charter to embrace and engage in the full range of responses to security situations as they arise.[5]

<div align="center">AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE</div>

During the Cold War there seemed little that medium-sized powers like Australia could do to lessen the tensions of the Cold War; the problems seemed entrenched and immovable. That sense of powerlessness has now been replaced by a sense of determination that Australia, as a good international citizen, should contribute in the international arena towards ensuring that something constructive and creative is developed to guarantee that, over the longer term, we enter a more peaceful and stable global environment.

Since the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, launched his book *Cooperating for Peace*,[6] Australia has taken every opportunity to advocate a new, broader approach to international peace and security issues. In *Cooperating for Peace*, Senator Evans proposed and sought to highlight a new approach based on the theme of cooperative security.[7]

The idea of cooperative security is to express, in a single conceptual theme, a set of balanced and realistic responses to international security problems. This approach emphasises prevention rather than correction. It also recognises security as a multi-dimensional concept going beyond the traditional focus on military threats and encompassing a range of political, economic, social, humanitarian, environmental and developmental problems, including those of transnational concern.

Peace building and preventive diplomacy sit at the conceptual heart of this new, broader approach to international peace and security issues. The expression 'peace building' describes a set of strategies which aim to ensure that disputes, armed conflicts and other major crises do not arise in the first place — or if they do arise, that they do not subsequently recur. It includes strategies that have more commonly been seen as part of the building of international and national security, but which are also directly relevant to the building of peace within national borders. These activities include the construction of international and regional structures to minimise threats, promote confidence and trust, and offer the means of dialogue and cooperation.

Peace building has two dimensions. 'Pre-conflict peace building' refers to longer-term, non-military, economic, social and political measures, which can help states deal with emerging threats and disputes. 'Post-conflict peace building' occurs after the resolution of a conflict or crisis in order to help ensure that there is no recurrence of the problem.[8]

A prime example of structure building in our own region is the ASEAN Regional Forum, established just last year. The basic rationale for the Forum is

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5   UN Charter ch VII, arts 39-51.
6   Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* (1993).
7   Ibid 15-6.
8   Ibid 9-10.

to generate a new atmosphere of multilateral cooperation in a regional security environment that was dominated throughout the Cold War years by division into major competing blocs, supported in each case by bilateral alliance relation-ships. Since the end of the Cold War, momentum has been growing for a new approach to regional security — one which would seek not the abandonment of traditional alliance relationships, but rather their supplementation by multilat-eral dialogue processes. No less than 18 states, including China, Russia and the United States, were represented at the Foreign Minister level at the Forum's inaugural meeting. The Forum has already become widely accepted as the region's major security dialogue structure.

Cooperative security is a particularly appropriate reaction to current problems, because it brings together the peace-and-security and social-economic aspects of the United Nations' work. The effect is to obviate the sterile and false debate which often rages over choices between the two, because it accepts that both are vital to the search for peace and that they are indissolubly linked. It forms part of the effort to reintegrate the United Nations' three basic Charter objectives of peace, development and human rights.[9]

Important aspects of the thinking behind this approach have been taken up in the Secretary-General's *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*,[10] as well as in the Security Council statement on 22 February 1995 which responded to it. The priority given to preventive diplomacy and other preventive approaches, and the recognition of the need to draw clear distinctions between different types of response, especially between peacekeeping and enforcement, is very welcome.

Economic development, human rights, good governance and peace are in fact inextricably connected and mutually reinforcing. Peace is a necessary pre-condition for development; and equitable development eradicates many of the socio-political conditions which threaten peace. It comes as no surprise to find that those countries whose economies are declining, whose political institutions are failing and where human rights are abused, should also be the ones experi-encing the greatest amounts of violence and turmoil.

Preventive strategies must not only try to remove the underlying causes of insecurity, they must also address actual disputes which may deteriorate into armed conflict if they are not resolved. Peace building, then, has to be supple-mented by strategies of peace maintenance, the major strand of which is preventive diplomacy. This term embraces a variety of strategies to resolve, or at least contain, disputes by relying on diplomatic or similar methods rather than military ones. These are the classic 'peaceful means' described in Article 33 of the UN Charter — negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement. Such methods can, of course, also be applied after a dispute has escalated into armed conflict.

Like peace building, preventive diplomacy, by its very nature, tends to be a low-profile activity, lacking the obvious media impact of blue helmet

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[9]   UN Charter preamble.
[10] Boutros-Ghali, above n 4.

peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations. Preventive diplomacy is often successful when things do not happen. It is most successful when it is applied early, well before armed conflict is likely. It is unfortunately too often the case in the UN system that preventive diplomacy efforts have been attempted too late, when the dynamics of escalation are so advanced that a slide into hostilities is almost inevitable.

The UN devotes relatively few resources to this activity, despite its importance and the fact that it is now universally acknowledged to be the most cost-effective means of dealing with potential conflict. For instance, the creation of six regional preventive-diplomacy centres with a total staff of 100 and the necessary support funding would cost little more than $20 million a year. By comparison, the UN's peacekeeping budget for 1993 was $3.7 billion, and the cost for the US-led multinational force of waging the Gulf War was $70 billion.[11] There are only some 40 UN officials assigned to tasks immediately relevant to preventive diplomacy. This contrasts with more than 70,000 UN peacekeepers last year[12] and approximately 30 million armed service personnel world-wide.[13] Some reforms to UN practice have been implemented, but far more needs to be done.

AUSTRALIAN PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING THE UN'S CAPACITY

As a measure of the importance we attach to preventive strategies, Australia has initiated a draft resolution on 'Peace Building and Preventive Diplomacy' and has devoted considerable effort to having the ideas contained in the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The resolution builds on *An Agenda for Peace*,[14] and seeks to encourage the UN to build stronger machinery in a manner consistent with the proposals in *Cooperating for Peace*.[15] Through the resolution we are seeking to develop the UN's capacity to operate as an active agent in the peaceful settlement of disputes. We hope to encourage progress in developing more effective collaboration on preventive diplomacy between the UN and regional bodies. These efforts include the exploration of ways and means to establish regional peace and security resource centres. Importantly, the draft resolution emphasises the importance of peace building strategies as part of the UN's role in conflict prevention. The resolution also calls for improved early warning and information collection and analysis mechanisms to facilitate decisions on whether and when preventive diplomacy measures should be applied.

In the draft resolution we have proposed that the UN should develop a dispute resolution service. While there are numerous *ad hoc* examples of involvement of the Secretary-General in the pacific settlement of disputes without a mandate

[11] Gareth Evans, above n 5, 119.
[12] Boutros-Ghali, above n 4, 4.
[13] UN Development Program, above n 1.
[14] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, UN Doc A/47/277, S/24111 (1992).
[15] Gareth Evans, above n 5.

from the Security Council, there is scope for enhancing the Secretary-General's good offices role. We support the idea of establishing an international pool of expertise on preventive diplomacy, and see the draft as a vehicle for exploring how this initiative might now be further developed. The UN dispute resolution service contemplated in the draft resolution would provide skilled third party assistance through good offices and mediation, while respecting the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of states. It should include an approach which focuses more on early preventive approaches, realising that we cannot leave it to the Security Council to deal with every potential conflict. Non-coercive, non-military responses to security problems are emphasised, noting that the costs and limitations of peacekeeping operations have underlined the importance of developing the UN's role as an agent for the peaceful settlement of disputes. While the efforts of individuals like former United States President Jimmy Carter are laudable, a more systematic international capacity for resolving and preventing conflict needs to be developed. Such a service would not require a significant reallocation of resources from other UN areas, but rather the mobilisation of existing resources (for example, those of the Department of Political Affairs) and assistance from governments.

The Australian mission at the United Nations in New York has recently devoted considerable effort to convincing other United Nations member states of the necessity and cost-effectiveness of preventing conflict rather than reacting to it, and further to attaining their agreement to the changes which are required in the United Nations system in order for this to occur. Changes to the United Nations do not come easily; considerable skill and persistence is required for even the most self-evident proposal to be adopted. The tactics used to sell our ideas and effect the changes required cover the full range of avenues available to us in the international arena. These include bilateral and multilateral dialogue, meetings, seminars and direct input from the Foreign Minister.

In September 1994 we circulated to a core group of prospective supporters (from both developed and developing countries) the draft text of this resolution. A wide range of countries commented on our initial draft, and a number of changes were made. In response to concerns expressed by some developing countries about the emphasis in the initial draft on the concept of 'human security', and to perceived sensitivities about national sovereignty, we replaced some sections of the draft with references to the link between equitable development and peace and security, as recognised in the Secretary-General's *An Agenda for Development*.[16] In making these changes, we have not backed away from references to the potential role of preventive diplomacy in addressing conflict within states, and have retained references to promoting participative systems of government as a means of reducing the potential for armed conflict. We realise that these will be controversial for a minority of delegations, but we see the need to have such important matters considered.

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[16] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Development*, UN Doc A/48/935 (1994).

At a meeting of UNGA in New York on 9 November 1994, 49 delegations representing all regional groups confirmed the widespread interest in our initiative. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) representatives stated that priority consideration should be given to *An Agenda for Development* and that there was a need for conceptual discussion of preventive diplomacy, as well as a stock-take on the implementation of *An Agenda for Peace,* before they were prepared to agree to negotiating another resolution on this subject. The widespread view of the meeting, however, was that further work on preventive diplomacy should be managed in a way that did not conflict with the attention required for *An Agenda for Development.*

Since that meeting, our mission in New York has continued to consult widely with delegations on our preventive diplomacy initiative. Open debate on 18 January in the Security Council on the Secretary-General's *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* provided an opportunity to advocate our initiative.[17] Australia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Butler, made a statement on 12 April which placed particular emphasis on the importance of strengthening the recourse to preventive diplomacy.[18] At a 'core group' meeting held in New York on 24 March, preventive diplomacy was identified as a priority area for consideration in the General Assembly's open-ended working group on the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace.*

The General Assembly working group on the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* has concluded the general statements phase of its work and will soon undertake the more detailed work through sub-groups, including a sub-group on preventive diplomacy. Australia has been urged to play a leading role in this sub-group because of its contribution to the development of ideas in this area, which now have a significant group of supporters within the United Nations. Australia will continue to review its implementation strategies on preventive approaches. This will include studying the possibility of integrating our draft resolution with the proposed resolution being prepared by the working group on the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace,* in the expectation that our widely discussed text could be one of the basic documents.

We have not been content to rest with our quest for change at the United Nations. The acceptance of new ideas requires efforts on many fronts. On 6 April 1995, the Australian mission to the United Nations in New York co-sponsored a seminar on preventive diplomacy with the International Peace Academy in New York. The seminar was useful in setting the stage for further discussions and negotiation on the issue of preventive diplomacy, and in foreshadowing the sorts of issues and argumentation that might arise. On yet another front, we see regional organisations as having the potential to be very important players in the prevention and containment of conflict. In a paper

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[17] Provisional Verbatim Record, 50 UN SCOR (3092nd mtg), UN Doc S/PV 3492 (1995).
[18] Statement by His Excellency Ambassador Richard Butler AM, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations General Assembly, to the Informal Open-ended Working Group on *An Agenda for Peace,* 12 April 1995, New York.

titled *Approaches to Peace Building and Preventive Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region,* which was delivered at the third ASEAN Regional Forum Intersessional Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy held in Seoul in May 1995, the ideas in *Cooperating for Peace* were developed and the creation of a Conflict Prevention Centre in the region was proposed.

It has not been all smooth sailing in winning support for our proposals. Indonesia, as Chair of NAM, informed us late last year that NAM members had reservations about our preventive diplomacy resolution being pursued 'at this time'. This was not because of opposition to the objective of improving UN and regional approaches to preventive diplomacy as such, but rather because NAM considered its top priority to be *An Agenda for Development.* While this is the main issue to be resolved, other questions have arisen which also need to be addressed. Some countries oppose progress on the UN's security role because of perceived threats to their sovereignty. Others fear that stronger preventive diplomacy would be a blueprint for a more intrusive UN and that strengthening the UN's preventive diplomacy machinery would divert resources from areas of the Secretariat responsible for development.

We are continuing to engage NAM and other developing-country delegations with a view to pursuing our efforts to build a preventive-diplomacy coalition representative of the wider UN membership. In our contacts with NAM countries we have emphasised that, while we appreciate the desire of some countries to give priority to *An Agenda for Development,* further work on preventive diplomacy can be managed in a way that does not conflict with the attention required for this important issue. We have also emphasised that there is scope to consider more than one major issue in this session of the General Assembly.

To relieve NAM of concern about sovereignty issues, we are stressing that an essential and accepted starting point for preventive diplomacy is respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of states. By nature, preventive diplomacy techniques[19] are non-intrusive and non-coercive since they require the consent of disputing parties. This is recognised by the Secretary-General who, in his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace,* states that '[c]learly the United Nations cannot impose its preventive and peacemaking services on Member States who do not want them.'[20] We are also emphasising that one of the strengths of preventive diplomacy is that it is all about non-military measures. It is quite distinct from preventive deployment using peacekeeping forces.

We would like the resolution to enhance the attention given to developmental issues, not to deflect attention or resources from them. We see the strengthening of the UN's ability to promote economic and social development as both an end in itself and a complement to efforts to do more to prevent conflict. Further work on preventive action can be managed in a way that does not conflict with the attention required for development issues.

[19]   UN Charter art 33.
[20]   Boutros-Ghali, above n 4, para 28.

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

While Australia's efforts to promote ideas of peace building and preventive diplomacy are being pursued primarily through the United Nations, we believe that regional organisations are well placed to play an important role in developing the type of institutional processes and structures which are important in this area. In our own region our suggestion that this issue be taken up within the context of the ASEAN Regional Forum has had some success. At the seminar on Preventive Diplomacy in Seoul in May 1995, we promoted our ideas for the establishment of a regional centre for conflict prevention and looked at ways of raising the profile of preventive approaches in the Forum.

Since 1993, regional mechanisms for conflict prevention have begun to emerge in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. For example, the Association of Southern African States (ASAS) has recently been formed as a part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with a strong conflict prevention objective. SADC is seeking recognition from the UN as a regional security body with a preventive diplomacy role. In the Middle East, the proposed Regional Security Centre in Jordan, and two related centres in Qatar and Tunis to be established through the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) working group, should also contribute to enhancing preventive diplomacy. And, of course, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has already established a Conflict Prevention Centre. Australia has proposed that the UN Secretary-General should report to UNGA 50 on what could be done to support the development of regional centres.

CONCLUSION

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations this year provides the opportunity to revitalise the organisation, to reintegrate its three basic objectives of peace, development and human rights, and to give it the new orientations it needs to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond. No challenge can be greater than meeting the central responsibility of ensuring that the people of the world enjoy the conditions of peace and security which the UN Charter promised them. If it is to do so, it is essential that the UN adopt new approaches to the new problems it faces.

Of course, many of these problems cannot be solved in the short term. In order for the idea of preventive approaches to be put into effect, consensus, rather than majority, decisions among member states are essential. This requires a careful analysis and response to countries which have raised the difficult questions of sovereignty, development and other matters.

A fundamental task of a reformed and revitalised UN is to make effective multilateral action possible. It is vital that we at least get consensus on what is to be done, get the agenda for action into place, and begin some of the basic internal structural reform. That in itself would be a huge advance.