

ANNUAL ERSKINE CHILDERS LECTURE 2012

Peacekeeping: Acting as a Good Tailor When the Need Arises

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In his essay on UN peacekeeping, published shortly before his untimely death in 1996, Erskine Childers quoted United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who had warned against a straight jacket approach. According to Hammarskjöld the UN 'cannot afford, or usefully have, a wardrobe sufficiently rich and varied to be able to pick out just the right suit as the situation arises. It is much better to have the cloth and go into action as a good tailor quickly when the need arises'. With 'the cloth' Hammarskjöld did not refer to the resources which the UN needed for peacekeeping, but to the UN mandate. Once country members had agreed on principles and procedures of decision making, each new peace-keeping operation could be cut to specific circumstances, while the Secretary-General would act as 'good tailor'.

Dag Hammarskjöld wrote this in 1959. In his essay Erskine Childers described how since then peacekeeping had changed. Childers wrote his article shortly after the tragedies of the early nineteen nineties: Angola, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. Millions of people had been killed or uprooted and displaced. Traditional peacekeeping, based on chapter six of the UN Charter, allowed for the deployment of a force with the consent of the warring parties, in order to keep a peace agreed by them. Peacekeepers would maintain strict neutrality. These so-called first generation of peacekeeping operations turned out to be an ineffective instrument in civil wars fought by rebels, insurgents and paramilitary groups, which were not willing to respect international (humanitarian) law. However, the Security Council was reluctant to enforce peace, and the mandate implied in chapter seven of the UN Charter. In order avoid irrelevance, and to enable a peacekeeping force to protect itself, if and when attacked, peacekeeping forces were allowed to combine consent-based monitoring and policing with some modest means of enforcement. But also these 'second generation' of peacekeeping operations could not prevent widespread escalation of conflicts. Moreover, peacekeeping required large scale financial, manpower and logistical resources. Member countries were hesitant to undertake new operations. In particular Permanent Members of the Security Council became less ready to do so, not only because of the high costs, but also because they were reluctant to share their intervention power to intervene with other countries and with the UN system.

As Erskine Childers has reminded us this stood in contrast to the proposal made in 1956 by US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to create a standing UN peacekeeping force. Hammarskjöld understood that as long as the Cold War would last, this would be too ambitious. That is why he spoke about the Secretary-General not as the owner of a wardrobe, picking out the right suit for the occasion, but as a good tailor cutting out the cloth to measure.

However, one might have expected that, even without going as far as establishing a standing force - which had been proposed again in 1992, this time by United Nations Secretary General Boutros-Ghali - after the end of the Cold War the big powers would have become less reluctant with regard to UN operations. In the nineteen nineties there were more intrastate wars than before. Rather than securing their respective geopolitical sphere of influence, Moscow and Washington had a common interest in preventing escalation of civil wars in other countries, which were a threat to international peace. However, this did not result in a greater willingness to work together with the UN. On the contrary, despite a rising need for quick action, responses were too little and too late.

In his article Erskine Childers mentioned some reasons why the good-tailor role had been coming apart at the seams: faulty needs assessments, inadequate resources, bad timing, and, above all, ambiguity of mandates. Childers was, as usually, utterly clear in his criticism: "Since 1989 ... the Security Council has involved the UN and troop-contributing countries in an ever-deeper quagmire of inadequate, ineffective and ambiguous mandates *from their outset*". The mandates and the resources were too restricted to guard relief assistance, to prevent 'ethnic cleansing' and to protect 'safe havens'. Peace forces were even hardly able to defend themselves. The mandates were also inflexible: once established they were seldom adapted to the situation on the ground. Childers cynically remarked that mandate changes and reinforcement did not take place when the situation had become desperate for a threatened populace or for the UN peacekeeping mission itself, but only if it had become politically embarrassing for Permanent Members of the Security Council. In such embarrassing situations the big powers preferred to act unilaterally, like for instance the US in Somalia and France in Rwanda, or to press the Security Council giving UN approval for a non-UN-commanded intervention by them.

Childers was very critical about such seemingly UN-blessed interventions. They were made with far larger resources, and were given far stronger mandates, than the countries had been willing to allow the UN. Eventual successes were attributed to the 'taking over from a failed UN operation', while shortcomings of a major-power intervention were framed as 'problems in picking up the pieces of UN incompetence'. Once the major power had exited the theatre, the UN was ordered to resume its responsibilities, but again not properly resourced. So, the whole cycle of alleged 'UN fiascos' could be resumed with ease.

Is this judgment too harsh? Let us recall: Childers wrote his article in the aftermath not only of the failures in Somalia and Rwanda, but also of those in the former Yugoslavia - where UN Blue Helmets failed to prevent genocide in Srebrenica - and in Sudan, where a war between the North and the South continued for more than a decade, seemingly unnoticed by the big powers.

Childers was right. The major powers had dominated decisions as to the nature and extent of the mandate, and the size of the forces, of every UN peace mission since the Cold War. This had resulted in eroding the ability of the UN to respond genuinely on behalf of the full international community.

However, one could argue that the international community still had to learn how to keep peace in a new situation. After the Cold War the tailor had to learn anew how to cut the cloth and, as Hammarskjöld had demanded, to act quickly when and where a need arose. Maybe the failures were due to teething troubles of the first years.

After 1996

In the meantime more than fifteen years have passed. Since Erskine Childers wrote his essay the world community experienced new conflicts, with global reach: 'nine-eleven', Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, the Arab Spring, and others. Has the international community responded better? I am afraid that present judgments would be no less harsh. In Iraq the UN was sidelined by the US, which preferred unilateral intervention, using a pretext, which turned out to be a lie. In Afghanistan Blue L Helmets carry out their mandate alongside US troops, fighting terrorists. The result is confusion. Peace has not been kept, the war is not being won and the adversaries make no distinction in choosing their targets. In Darfur the Security Council decided not to do anything during the genocide itself, and to wait deploying a mission until the Sudanese regime and the Janjaweed had cleansed the area. UN peacekeepers in Congo have neither been able to deter warring factions in Kivu, nor to protect the local population from being raped or killed. Since the beginning of this century more people have been killed in Congo than in all neighbouring countries together. The UN has lost credibility: the force is ineffective, and, acting alongside the Congolese army, no longer considered impartial. Sexual misconduct by peacekeepers themselves has further damaged the UN's image.

The recent UN Security Council resolution mandating NATO to intervene in Libya in order to protect civilians has been unilaterally interpreted by intervening countries as a legitimizing regime change. NATO's means and methods (aerial bombardment, without troops on the ground) have resulted in scores of civilian victims. Protection of civilians became a secondary objective. This unilateral action has headed off China and Russia from adopting peacekeeping resolutions regarding other countries. This dispute amongst the big powers has paralysed the Security Council. The Council is not able to take action concerning Syria, where numerous people fall victim to ongoing violence between the regime and an expanding number of factions.

There have been successes as well. In South Sudan UN peace keepers, having been invited by North and South Sudan, have helped the parties to stick to an agreement reached after decades of war. Some years earlier the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea had been contained with the help of a mutually agreed UN peacekeeping force, monitoring the frontier between these countries. This could last until Eritrea withdrew from the agreement, but the departure of the peacekeepers did not result in a resumption of hostilities. UN interventions have helped ending civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Ivory Coast. The interventions in these countries came after oppression and fighting had lasted quite some time and had made many victims. Peacekeeping forces were able to deter mass attacks, though their capacity and resources were too limited to guarantee full protection of civilians. However, the interventions, combining mediation with a fair degree of enforcement, have established more than just a minimum degree of security and stability. They had a catalyzing effect on the endeavours of conflicting parties to reach sustainable peace between them.

Taken together, this is still a far cry from what Dag Hammarskjöld meant when he spoke of 'going into action quickly when the need arises'. The tailor is no longer in charge of cutting the cloth. He has become a messenger-boy. The store has grown big, with quite a few CEO's, but they are absent or quarrelling.

However, despite the shoddy cutting to measure of Hammarskjöld's cloth, some efforts were successfully made to refine the cloth itself. Since the end of the Cold War new principles and criteria

have been introduced, which can help making peacekeeping more effective. Proposals to introduce the new concept of humanitarian intervention - intervention in order to prevent violence against civilians, to protect them and to ensure safe humanitarian assistance -, though not resulting in new international law, have changed the political climate. Advocacy by humanitarians, NGO's, Human Rights activists and others, have led to embarrassment of political leaders, which, for whatever reason, refused to act. In the same period new paradigms were introduced: human development instead of development, and human security rather than national security. In combination with human rights these became a forceful threefold concept, and a basis for comprehensive action towards sustainability, another new paradigm.

After the turn of the century these discussions led to new instruments and institutions. The establishment of the International Criminal Court helped defining accountability for mass violations of human rights, and introducing procedures to bring an end to impunity. The principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was defined, as a criterion to judge the desirability of intervention, if a regime would fail to protect its people. Mandates of UN Peacekeeping forces were extended, allowing military action to protect not only the force itself, if and when attacked, but also the civilian population. Initially this was only allowed, and left to the discretion of field commanders, but later on UN forces were given concrete assignments to this end. While during the early years they were expected to protect only the population in the near vicinity (or in their areas of deployment), and only in so far as they had the capabilities to do so, subsequent mandates did tone down these restrictions. Moreover, the reach of a vicinity and the strength of a force capacity are no absolute quantitative categories, but subject to interpretation by an SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary General) and the field commanders.

The new principles did not only affect mandates of peacekeeping missions, once established, but also decisions whether or not to intervene, witness the recent UN Security Council resolutions regarding Ivory Coast and Libya. This is welcome. However, it may create new difficulties, and has already done so. Any abuse of an R2P mandate, as in the case of Libya, is bound to affect this principle as legitimizing ground for action. Moreover, the extension of the mandate of a peacekeeping mission with the responsibility to protect civilians, irrespective of their location and not restricted by advance capability considerations, has been diluted by another consideration: civilians under imminent threat of physical violence must be protected without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government concerned. This may seem logical, because it is the duty of the government of a sovereign state to protect its citizens - and not attack them, or allow others to do so. However, when a government, despite having agreed with the deployment of peacekeepers, is reluctant to cooperate on the ground, or when its forces obstruct peacekeepers in the execution of their tasks, or - as has been the case in Darfur - when a government orders the army to attack towns and villages on the pretext of protecting civilians supposedly threatened by rebel forces, then such a mandate clips peacekeepers' wings.

So, overall successes of UN peacekeeping have been rather limited. The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to peace building, defined as an effort to make peace more sustainable, after a truce has been reached, and large scale fighting has come to a halt, or after the signing of a peace treaty, beginning a period of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Peace building is crucial. Without lasting prospects of security, justice, better living conditions and welfare, people may ask: 'peace,

what's in it for us?'. Such questions can easily lead to the belittling of achievements and a resumption of hostilities.

Erskine Childers concluded his essay with a plea to keep UN operations 'genuinely multilateral and on behalf of the membership as a whole'. Rather than leaving decisions and their implementation to the major powers in the Security Council, governments should "develop alternative modalities, equipping the General Assembly with far more extensive – and if necessary operational – responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, the preservation of mass human rights, and the succour of large segments of populations brought to humanitarian desperation by the tides of war".

This plea is in line with other proposals made by Erskine Childers to restore the truly multilateral character of the United Nations, for instance with regard to international trade, finance, growth and development. In all his speeches Childers has consistently argued in favor of the General Assembly and its Committees, including ECOSOC. Decisions should be as representative as possible for the world community as a whole, more legitimate, more credible in the eyes of the peoples of the world, with a greater chance to be held in respect, and thus more sustainable.

I share this plea in favour of genuine multilateralism. The UN is due for reform, also with regard to peacekeeping and peace building.

Fewer conflicts and victims?

However, before further elaborating possible reforms, the question may arise to which extent there will be a need for peacekeeping in the future. If the need would decrease, the UN could confine itself to making adjustments to peacemaking practice, instead of striving for institutional reform.

This question is not as strange as it may seem. According to some international reports nowadays there are fewer conflicts, making fewer victims than in the past. If this is true, and if this would not be a temporary phenomenon, but a structural trend, there would be less need for international intervention, including humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations.

Statements about the number and nature of conflicts can be found in the Human Security Report, published periodically and widely quoted as an authoritative source of information regarding international conflict trends. Recently the authors of this report have depicted an optimistic image. According to the report, "since the Cold War ended some 20 years ago, there has been a major decline in the number of armed conflicts being waged around the world, with high intensity conflicts dropping by almost 80%". The number of state based armed conflicts and civil wars is declining. The number of intercommoned and other conflicts that do not involve government forces is fluctuating, but these conflicts rarely last longer than a year, and their death tolls are small compared to those in wars involving a government as a warring party. In the view of the authors of the report, conflicts have actually become less intractable, and less difficult to resolve: 40% of those conflicts which the experts considered intractable in 2005 had ended by 2008.

Moreover, according to the report, the number of victims is decreasing. There are fewer battle deaths, and also the number of civilians casualties seems to be lower than often has been assumed. The authors claim that there is no evidence to support suggestions that civilian deaths as a share of all war deaths have been increasing. Moreover, indirect death from war exacerbated disease and

malnutrition is declining. They conclude that civilians face no greater threat today than they have over the last twenty years.

These are remarkable findings. The explanation, presented in the report, is that the long term risk of civil war has been reduced by rising levels of economic development that have increased the resources governments can deploy to co-opt adversaries, redress grievances and defeat insurgences that cannot be prevented or ended by negotiation. The Report concludes: there is evidence that "development is an important long-term form of conflict prevention".

I am not convinced. The argument is misleading, and can lead to misguided policy conclusions, with regard to both development and peace. I do not dispute the numbers. The authors of the report present the figures with the usual caveats. However, I question the definitions. I also doubt the analysis. A conflict is not an incident; conflicts are inherent to processes of development. Development implies change, and different groups in a society - farmers, herdsman, landless people, urban citizens, entrepreneurs, labourers, various tribes, clans, classes, ethnic groups and religious denominations, man and women, older people and the youth, traditional elites and people attracted by modernity, powerful rulers and emancipating citizens - , they all have different interests in a status quo and in change: the character and modalities of change character, the direction and consequences, and the distribution of costs and benefits of change. There is no development without conflict. Development is conflict. The question is to which extent conflicts can be managed properly during a process of structural change, and to which extent conflict escalation can be prevented. Conflicts cannot be prevented, only their escalation. Conflicts exist. They have neither a beginning nor an end. Conflicts cannot be solved, but their escalation can be contained: their escalation into increasing complexity because of intertwining economic, environmental, cultural and political dimensions, their possible escalation across national frontiers, and also their escalation into violence. In principle all conflicts are intractable. They can be confined in terms of dimensions, time and space, but they can always manifest themselves again and flare up.

So, there are many more conflicts than highlighted by institutions, such as the World Bank, which tell us that the situation is better than before. There are also more victims. Defining a conflict in terms of more than 1000 battle deaths annually may serve a statistical purpose, but it is misleading. There are many more victims: people killed outside battle, women raped, persons take as prisoner arbitrarily and tortured, people vanishing, children starving or dying because of the breakdown of health care due to war, refugees, uprooted and displaced people, men and women wounded or mutilated and terrorised because they are considered enemies, and all those whose basic human rights are violated and who are being oppressed. Most of these people have not been counted, because they cannot be counted: the conflict itself makes it impossible to count. Many of them are not known, because parties to the conflict consider them irrelevant. The world outside does know neither their face nor their name and will easily forget them. They also won't be remembered by their relatives, because the latter often suffer the same fate.

It may well be that a decrease in the number of battle deaths goes hand in hand with an increase of other casualties. Since the end of the Cold War there were indeed fewer international wars between states. In the same period some intrastate conflicts did result in large scale confrontations on a battle field, such as in South Sudan. However, most conflicts got the character of guerrilla warfare, or moor

fires, or widespread and repetitive small attacks, each of those making victims, many victims together. Conflicts also have developed into violent banditry and robbery by warlords, and in sheer crime, based on trade in arms, drugs and women. Conflicts have also resulted in dictatorship, whereby state terrorism resulted in quiet, but not in peace. Arguing, like the Human Security Report, that due to economic development governments have become more able to prevent wars from starting, and to stop them, and win those which can't be stopped, and that this is progress and a kind of peace, is astonishingly naïve. Considering possible policy consequences of such an argument makes it even frightening. Economic growth will indeed enable regimes to use increased resources for bribing adversaries, and better arming their military, police and secret services. However, this will not bring an end to the conflicts themselves. The implicit conclusion of the report that, if levels of economic development rise, the risk of war falls, is unfounded. Indeed, development can be a powerful means of stemming conflicts, but not if development is limited to economic growth, first and for all benefiting ruling classes. Human security requires human development.

It is also quite naïve to assume that conflicts are becoming less intractable, and more easily solved. Countries such as Ivory Coast and Mali, which a decade ago were considered relatively stable and peaceful, have become theatres of civil war. Pakistan and Nigeria have never been very stable, but in both countries instability is taking proportions of disorder. Pakistan has become a war zone, due to developments in its neighbour country Afghanistan. Nigeria has been affected by increasing extremism in West Africa. Attacks between Muslims and Christians have increased, and groups like Boko Haram have become repetitive perpetrators of deadly violence. The whole Sahelian belt in Africa has become fragile. And who had foreseen the Arab Spring, resulting in the surfacing and escalation of conflicts in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, which will not easily remit? The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fully intractable. It increasingly affects the Middle East as a whole. In a number of Caucasian countries and countries of Eastern Europe there is more instability and violence than before the end of the Cold War, when they still belonged to the former Soviet Union. In Turkey confrontations with the Kurdish minority are no less violent than before. Iran is a powder room. The power and reach of criminal gangs in Mexico and other countries of Central America have increase beyond the control of governments. It has resulted in a war against drugs and drug traders, numerous victims, anarchy and corruption, uprooted youth, overpopulated prisons, and criminal underworld connections with the US, Europe and West Africa, without prospect of de-escalation. My conclusion is different: conflicts have become more intractable, not less.

This intractability has become even more complex due to globalization. Globalization is of all times, but since the end of the Cold War the process has entered a new phase. Markets for raw materials, commodities, products, services, money, finance and technology have become worldwide. They are no longer restricted by national frontiers. Market globalization goes hand in hand with assertive geopolitical behaviour of big powers and emerging economies. Nowadays conflicts between nations seldom lead to interstate war. They result in economic and political intervention in third parties, and support to regimes of other countries or their adversaries. Such interventions do not aim at securing spheres of ideological and political influence, like before 1989. Those influence spheres have lost significance. The objective of present-day interventions is threefold:

1. Providing access to resources, such as fertile land, water, energy and raw materials, in order to sustain economic growth against the background of increasing physical scarcities, larger needs and increasing competition,
2. Securing the interests of transnational companies, which have special ties with the countries concerned,
3. Guaranteeing national security.

These interventions, taking place with the help of financial, economic, political, cultural, military and intelligence means, render the distinction between domestic conflicts and international conflicts artificial. The distinction between stable, well-governed countries and fragile or even failing nation states is not sharp either. All societies are vulnerable. All countries share a certain degree of fragility. All can be affected by escalations of conflicts, from within and from outside. Look at the countries mentioned above. Look at Greece. Look in particular also at those countries, with relatively stable, safe and prosperous regions, next to districts where violence is taking its toll, such as the Amazon region in Brazil, Irian Jaya in Indonesia, Tibet and Xinjiang in China, and Chechenia in Russia.

Rather than speaking about stable and fragile countries we should refer to countries which are, in various degrees, 'conflict escalation prone'. Everywhere in the world there are more or less conflict escalation prone situations. Everywhere smaller or larger population groups, sometimes majorities, suffer poverty, deprivation and exclusion. They live under conditions of inequality. They experience denial of access to basic services, land, food, water, energy, health and education, and - last but not least - political influence. When we define development as freedom, following A.K. Sen, who sees freedom as the primary end of development as well as the principal means of development, we can only conclude that still many people lack development, because they lack freedom. One should not be surprised about frequent and widespread resistance against unfreedom, violation of human rights, and denial of access to human security and human development. One should also not be surprised about ongoing suppression by elitist and powerful regimes, which have an interest in the status quo and do not shy away from pre-emptive strikes against their own citizens.

All such violent conflicts, shaped and fought in different ways and intensities, can be called wars, the 'New Wars', as defined by Mary Kaldor. Following the liberation wars during the era of decolonization, and since the Cold War, the world is going through a series of interrelated intrastate wars, highly complex and fed from within and from outside. As Mary Kaldor concluded, in these New Wars it is difficult to distinguish combatants from non-combatants. In peacekeeping operations it would be difficult to distinguish well-meaning parties from 'spoilers'. The utterly complex character of these wars makes them difficult to contain, and even more so to end. Official regimes, regular army, police, para-military, militia, rebels, breakaway factions, insurgents, warlords, bandits, criminal gangs, security agencies, self defence groups and commercial private security forces, all these parties have an interest to continue violence. Many of them do not shy away from deliberately targeting civilians at a large scale. Civilian death, starvation, terror, torture and rape are used not to gain territorial control, but as a means to defeat people's minds, and to achieve keep political control of gainful resources.

While emphasizing economic factors and by referring to violence, not only as an instrument, but also as an objective, I do not mean that Paul Collier is right pointing towards greed rather than grievance, as the main driver of conflict. The underlying basic reasons why, in the countries mentioned above, conflicts exist and escalate are economic, political, social, cultural and other grievances of population groups. However, the continuation of the violence and the recruitment of new combatants are often fed by the violence itself, in perpetual motion, by security considerations - self defence and protection of clans and kins -, and also by greed. Greed doesn't start a conflict, greed follows. This makes existing conflicts even more complex. And it requires that peacekeeping and peace building operations are designed in a comprehensive way, not as straight jacket, but, as had been foreseen by Hammarskjöld, situation specific and tailor made.

Since Mary Kaldor introduced the concept, the New Wars have become even more difficult to contain. As I indicated above, attacks on civilians are no longer collateral damage, but an aim in itself. Violence is not only a instrument to defeat an enemy, but a means of breeding chaos and terror, providing fertile ground for whatever parties wish to achieve. Moreover, since the beginning of this century the underlying causes of the conflicts - grievances, inequalities, injustices and scarcities - will not go away. They will become more and more serious; they will be felt more deeply. Economic growth benefiting world middle classes in a situation of increasing resource scarcities will result in more competition and class conflict. Governance institutions of nation states are brought under pressure. They lose legitimacy and trust. This is weakening national capacities to stem escalating conflicts, which are increasingly fed by forces outside control of any party within a country.

So, conflict management, prevention of conflict escalation, peacekeeping and peace building have become both more needed and more difficult than in the years between 1989 and the turn of the century. Reforms are crucial.

Reform

Are they feasible? Erskine Childers had argued that it is essential to restore the genuinely multilateral character of peace operations. The question is: how? In his *Agenda for Peace* UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali had made a plea for preventive diplomacy, which is a form of early political action, and preventive deployment: a rapid-reaction UN force, which could act quickly, without requesting member states to deliver new troops for a peacekeeping mission. Boutros was also the first Secretary General who developed a vision on the relation between peace and development: both depend on each other and require a comprehensive approach. He established a special department at UN headquarters (DPKO), which should oversee peacekeeping missions. However, the Security Council did not support him, and he was not granted a second term.

This did not imply that the big powers were resisting any form of multilateral peacekeeping. President Clinton had expressed a willingness to explore 'assertive multilateralism', a concept dubbed by his Permanent Representative to the UN, Madeleine Albright. However, this notion did not get an operational expression. Developments after the Cold War had resulted in an increasing void between traditional peacekeeping – which in essence implied a non-military mission, carried out by military personnel – and large scale peace enforcing. As John Ruggie explained in an article in 1993, filling this void would require a combination of political and military objectives: not to defeat aggressors, but to neutralise them, to deter aggression, to dissuade escalation, to deny parties the

possibility of victory and to persuade them to seek a negotiated settlement. However, such a peacekeeping strategy would require adequate resources, a willingness to deploy them quickly and effectively, whenever the need would arise, and political consensus between UN member states backing this deployment.

Several years later, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, requested Lakhdar Brahimi to chair a commission which should draw lessons from peacekeeping failures. The Brahimi Report sought to strengthen the UN's peacekeeping capacity, by establishing standby brigades and assuring financial resources, and by suggesting an innovative approach towards the planning and programming of missions. However, the Security Council declined most recommendations. So, fifteen years after Erskine Childers wrote that it were the major powers that had undermined the ability of the UN to respond genuinely on behalf of the full international community, not much has been accomplished.

Does this mean that the only option is to equip the UN General Assembly, rather than the Security Council, with the political and operational responsibility to launch peacekeeping operations? This was Erskine Childers' preferred option. It may still seem the ideal option. However, there are two caveats. First, it is not certain that handing over these responsibilities would result in timely decisions and adequate operations. A smaller representative body would be in a better position to act 'quickly when the need arises'. Second, even if this were the case, it is a theoretical option only. Whatever one may prefer, the five Permanent Members of the Security Council will not give away their right to veto decisions of such a scope.

However, this does not preclude reform, including reform within the purview of the Security Council. Any substantial reform of the United Nations would, in one way or the other, affect the position of the Security Council. Any substantive change in the mandate of the Council would require consensus. So, each of the five Permanent Members is in the position to veto such change. However, since 1945 the economic and political power relations in the world have changed due to decolonization, globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of new and populous middle class economies. This must have changed countries' perceptions of their own interests, including the perceptions of the Big Five. This could result in a greater willingness to accept reforms.

Decisions concerning peacekeeping would be politically more respected, beyond being formally legitimate, if the Security Council would be seen as more representative for the world community as a whole. To this end the Council would benefit from a change in its composition, with major emerging economies such as India, Brazil and South Africa as new permanent members, without a veto, while the present permanent members, though keeping their right to veto, agree to use this under well-defined very special conditions only, with a view to a gradual abolition of the veto in a couple of decades. Such a reform, as had been proposed by the Commission on Global Governance in its report *Our Global Neighbourhood*, is not radical, but yet ambitious and also feasible. It could be achieved through negotiations guided by a combination of wisdom, pragmatism and enlightened self-interest.

The same combination of rational forethought and political pragmatism would be required in reforms concerning other than the traditional threats to peace and security: economic instability and crisis, financial meltdown, destruction of the natural environment, climate change, epidemics, resources depletion, scarcity of food, water and energy, and risks due to an unchecked use of new

technologies. These issues are being discussed in plenary fora, such as the UN General Assembly and its Committees, including ECOSOC – all them comprehensive, but not action oriented – , in the Bretton Woods institutions and the bodies of WHO, UNEP and other agencies. The latter fora can launch operational programs, but they are sectoral and compartmentalised, and not in a position to address risks and threats in their entirety. For this reason it would be desirable to have a body which, when push comes to shove, can deal with threats to international security effectively. Such a body should (1) consist of a relative small group of countries, (2) with a mandate given by all other countries together, (3) work on the basis of a body of indisputable international law, such as the UN Charter, (4) be able to take enforceable decisions, (5) with sanctions in case of non-compliance. A reformed Security Council would be pre-eminently suited to function as such body, provided that its mandate could be interpreted along those lines.

Presently these threats to global security are on the agenda of the G20. However, this is a self-elected group of countries, without a mandate from the rest of the world community, taking decisions outside the realm of international law, in short: lacking legitimacy. The G20, based on co-optation and exclusion, is the embodiment of international inequality. Instead of helping to find a way out of insecurities, G20 tactics complicate matters.

Broadening the mandate of the Security Council would be a preferable option. The credibility of the Council would benefit from establishing a separate chamber – a so-called Economic and Environmental Security Council, which could have the same composition in terms of countries, meeting not at the level of ministers of foreign affairs or their proxies, but between ministers of finance, agriculture, environment or otherwise, according to the character of the security threat concerned. A comprehensive approach could be guaranteed by meetings of the Council at the level of prime minister or head of state. Such summit meetings, within the framework of the United Nations, would be the best way to get rid of the self empowered G20.

A UN Charter-based Council with a fully comprehensive mandate to deal with global peace and security, duly reformed in order to represent the community of nations as a whole, would be an important step towards more effective peacemaking. However, this is not enough. The task of the Security Council is to address conflicts if and when these are a real threat to international security. This will always be a matter of judgment. In practice this means that national conflicts will be put on the international agenda at a rather late stage only. In many cases this is too late to apply a variety of diplomatic and political instruments in order to address a conflict and prevent further escalation. Such a conflicts will often already have escalated into violence or even wars. The Council will soon find itself in a position of making a choice between two options only: sending or subcontracting Peace Force, which is basically a military tool, such as most recently has been the choice with regard to Libya, or not doing anything, witness Syria.

However, there is a third option. The General Assembly, through the Security Council, could give a general mandate to another UN body to address national conflicts early and timely, long before these are perceived as a threat to international security. Such a body should have the responsibility to address appeals from parties within a country (tribal, ethnic and religious groups, indigenous peoples, underprivileged classes, minorities as well as majorities), also when these parties approach the UN, having bypassed the government of that country. It could be requested by the General

Assembly or the Security Council to consider a specific situation. It should also have the mandate to take an initiative on its own, on the basis of a majority vote, not restricted by veto rights. Listening to appeals and responding to them, the body should have the right to use a variety of diplomatic and political instruments. It should have the right to send missions, including fact finding, review and appraisal missions. The Chamber should have a mandate to advise parties in a country, and to mediate between them.

Such a body could be called a Pre-Chamber of the Security Council. It could have any composition, depending on the case concerned. The Chamber should have the mandate to carry out its tasks without advance consent from the Council. It should report to the Security Council, and make recommendations to the Council if it wishes to do so. The Security Council could, of course, decide at a certain point to put the issue on its own agenda.

In my view a new instrument of this kind would enhance the capacity of the UN to deal with conflicts at an early stage, instead of waiting until a moment at which it is too late to address the underlying causes, leaving two options only: military intervention or no action at all. This situation ensnares individual countries to intervene themselves, politically or otherwise, thereby risking international security even more. A porch or Pre-Chamber of the Security Council, with a Charter-based political mandate, could function as a mirror of the UN Peace Building Committee, which some years ago was established as a kind of 'Post-Chamber', in order to deal with so-called post-conflict peace building. Because of a rather thin line between pre- and post-conflict situations, peace, security and development programs would benefit from cooperation between the two chambers.

These three reforms would help reconstructing the capacity of the UN system to act 'genuinely on behalf of the full international community', as Erskine Childers had called for. They would also help the UN to meet Hammarskjöld's demand, and go 'into action as a good tailor quickly when the need arises'. Reforms like these will be necessary, though not sufficient. More reforms are required. The UN should develop into a system within which all agencies are obliged to work together in a unified fashion, under unified command. Member states should get the right to elect a strong person as Secretary General of the United Nations, independent of the big powers and for one term only. The UN should have the right to raise its own resources, instead of begging country members. The organisation should have its own small standing military and police force, which can fulfil peacekeeping functions until member states have brought together a full-fledged UN peaceforce, ready for deployment. And, last but not least, the UN system should be reformed in such a way that peacekeeping, peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development can be integrated into unified field programs. At the end of the day sustainable peace can only be accomplished on the ground.

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