

101 Steps Toward a More Secure World

By Don Kraus | December 8, 2004

The newly released United Nations report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* has the potential to reshape the United Nations and redefine collective security. A core premise of the report is that today's "threats recognize no national boundaries, are connected, and must be addressed at the global and regional as well as the national levels." It is a "must read" for anyone who cares about international affairs.

The High Level Panel on the Threats, Challenges was commissioned over a year ago by Secretary General Kofi Annan, after the divisive Security Council showdown over Iraq. In calling for this report Annan said, "We have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded." The Panel's report details 101 recommendations on how the United Nations can best be modernized to respond effectively to the full range of threats that confronts an interconnected 21st century world including:

- A definition of terrorism as actions "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose ... is to intimidate a population or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."
- Making membership in the Commission on Human Rights universal with prominent human rights figures as the heads of national delegations.
- Adoption of a new normative value called the Responsibility to Protect, which lays out a structure for when, how, and under what circumstances the international community has the responsibility to intervene in a nation when its government cannot or will not protect its citizens from genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity.
- Approval of five basic criteria for authorization of the use of force that questions: the seriousness of threat, the purpose for using force, if it is the last resort, proportional means, and what are the balance of consequences.
- Creating within the UN a small corps of senior police officers (50-100) to plan and organize international civilian police operations.
- Allowing the UN to fund regional peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council with assessed contributions.
- Establishing a Peacebuilding Commission to identify and assist countries that risk sliding toward collapse.
- Beginning new negotiations on a new long-term strategy for reducing global warming.
- Security Council is being prepared to refer cases of suspected war crimes and crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court.
- A State's notice of withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should prompt immediate verification of its compliance with the Treaty.
- Two alternative proposals to increase the size of the Security Council from 15 to 24 members and review the composition of the Security Council in 2020.
- Amending the UN's charter to delete all references in the charter to the World War II-era concept of "enemy States" and eliminate the UN's outdated Trusteeship Council and the Military Staff committee.

In making its case for these recommendations, the report dramatically broadens the definition of "collective security." The United Nations was founded in 1945 to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." But 60 years later the threats that we



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face—from nuclear proliferation and international terrorism to collapsed states spawned by hunger, poverty, AIDS, and environmental disasters—go far beyond those associated with wars of aggression. In developing its recommendations, the Panel defined six “clusters” of threats that the world must deal with:

- Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious diseases, and environmental degradation
- Inter-State conflict
- Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide, and other large-scale atrocities
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical, and biological weapons
- Terrorism
- Transnational organized crime

The report asserts that individual nations are still the “front-line actors” in dealing with threats both old and new, but in the twenty-first century no nation, no matter how powerful, can stand alone. It makes a compelling case that in today’s world a threat to one is a threat to all. Some examples:

Any one of the 700 million international airline passengers every year can be an unwitting carrier of a deadly infectious disease. SARS spread to more than 8,000 people in 30 countries in 3 months.

Globalization means that a major terrorist attack anywhere in the industrial world can have devastating consequences for millions in the developing world. The World Bank estimates that the 9-11 attacks increased the number of people living in poverty by 10 million and cost the world’s economy over \$80 billion.

The report also promotes the strengthening of UN partnerships with regional organizations and individual member states. It recognizes the current gap in terms of mobilizing political will and coordinating governments. It supports the growth of peacekeepers and calls on wealthy nations to transform existing forces into contingents suitable for UN peace operations. It also calls for greater investment in mediation and support for the implementation of peace agreements, as well as demobilizing and reintegrating combatants into civilian life to bring civil wars to an end.

The Panel boldly calls for “nothing less than a new consensus between alliances that are frayed, between wealthy nations and poor, and among peoples mired in mistrust across an apparently widening cultural abyss. The essence of that consensus is simple: we all share responsibility for each other’s security. And the test of that consensus will be action.”

The strength of this report is that it is a collective response to security that has something in it for all nations. For example developing nations will support calls for donor countries that currently fall short of the UN’s goal of .7% of gross national product for development assistance to establish a timetable for reaching it. They will also support greater representation on the Security Council.

Washington will most likely endorse an arrangement for the International Atomic Energy Agency to act as a guarantor for the supply of fissile material to civilian nuclear users and while that is being negotiated, States should institute a moratorium on the construction of any uranium enrichment and reprocessing facilities with a guarantee of a supply of fissile materials. The adoption of a formal definition of terrorism by the General Assembly will also be high on the U.S. list of recommendations to support.

According to General Brent Scowcroft, a member of the High-Level Panel and former national security adviser under presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, “The report puts forward a bold new vision of collective security to make the UN work better and the U.S. more secure ... It would place many of America’s security concerns at the center of a common world agenda including stopping proliferation of nuclear weapons, building public health defense against biological terrorism, and preventing nuclear terrorism. And, most importantly, all of the report’s recommendations will rebound to the benefit of American security; none would unduly constrain American freedom to act.”

One clear sign that the report is being taken seriously were the comments that President Bush made while describing his foreign policy goals in Halifax Canada on December 1st. Although the Panel’s genesis was in part due to U.S. unilateral actions, President Bush did what many will consider to be a

complete about face when he talked about his “commitment is to defend our security and spread freedom by building effective multinational and multilateral institutions and supporting multilateral action.” He said, “My country is determined to work as far as possible within the framework of international organizations, and we’re hoping that other nations will work with us to make those institutions more relevant and more effective in meeting the unique threats of our time.” Although the president did everything but say “the High-Level Panel report is an important report and the U.S. will work with it,” the administration is preparing a detailed interagency response to this report.

Next Steps

This report is the beginning, not the end, of the process for creating a more effective UN. Next year will be a crucial opportunity for member states to discuss and build on the recommendations of the report. Although Secretary-General Annan has come under attack because of the Oil for Food program, nations have rallied around him. Even the administration has refrained from joining members of Congress in their rather untimely UN bashing on the week of the report’s release. Annan is planning to incorporate select recommendations from this and other reports into his March 2005 Report on the Millennium Review. The March report is expected to set the agenda for a summit of world leaders scheduled for September 2005, the UN’s 60th anniversary. The odds are that Member States will support Annan in this process, because the stakes are too high for all if the collective security system cannot be reinvented. National governments and civil society will surely try to influence the key points of the 2005 agenda. However, building a secure world will take more than just a report or a summit. It will require resources and commitment, as well as leadership from member states commensurate with the challenges ahead. The stakes are high for the world and the UN as it determines which “fork in the road” it will take.

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FOR MORE READING:

A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility
<http://www.un.org/secureworld/>

United Nations and Global Security (UN Foundation)
<http://www.un-globalsecurity.org/index.asp>

FOR MORE ANALYSIS FROM FOREIGN POLICY IN FOCUS:

Getting Peacekeeping Right at the G-8
By Don Kraus (June 7, 2004)
<http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2004/0406peacekeeping.html>

de Mello’s Delight
By Don Kraus (September 10, 2003)
<http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2003/0309demello.html>

The Need for UN Police
By Don Kraus (June 5, 2003)
<http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2003/0306uncops.html>

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