

The United Nations and Global Security

Can it deal with today's threats?

The United Nations was founded after World War II to promote global security. But following the bitter divisions created in the Security Council last year by the U.S.-led Iraq war, some observers question whether the U.N. can foster global peace and stability. Critics contend that Article 51 of the U.N. charter, which grants nations the right to self-defense, doesn't allow them to act against rogue states and terrorists. Others say the Security Council lacks credibility because many of today's big powers — like Japan and India — are not permanent members. But U.N. supporters say the charter does allow nations to counter threats, even pre-emptively, and that the Security Council can effectively promote peace and security.



Uruguayan troops are part of a 12,000-member U.N. peacekeeping mission helping to maintain stability in Congo after a brutal civil war.

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The CQ Researcher • Feb. 27, 2004 • www.theqcresearcher.com
Volume 14, Number 8 • Pages 173-196



RECIPIENT OF SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE ♦ AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION SILVER GAVEL AWARD

THE UNITED NATIONS AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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CQ Researcher

Feb. 27, 2004
Volume 14, No. 8

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A Division of
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The CQ Researcher (ISSN 1056-2036) is printed on acid-free paper. Published weekly, except Jan. 2, April 9, July 2, July 9, Aug. 6, Aug. 13, Nov. 26 and Dec. 31, by CQ Press, a division of Congressional Quarterly Inc. Annual subscription rates for libraries, businesses and government start at \$625. Single issues are available for \$10. Quantity discounts apply to orders over 10. Additional rates furnished upon request. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The CQ Researcher*, 1255 22nd St., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Cover: U.N. peacekeepers from Uruguay are helping maintain a fragile cease-fire in Congo following a civil war that killed 3 million people. Thirteen U.N. peacekeeping missions currently are deployed around the world. (AFP Photo/Peter Busomokie)

The United Nations and Global Security

BY DAVID MASCI

THE ISSUES

On Aug. 19, 2003, a gleaming, new cement truck packed with explosives crashed through a chain-link fence and into a corner of the Canal Hotel, the U.N.'s headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq. The resulting explosion was massive, virtually destroying the three-story building.

The bombing killed 22 people and wounded more than 100, prompting the U.N. to withdraw all its non-Iraqi staff. Among the dead was the apparent target of the attack, Brazilian diplomat Sergio Viera de Mello, the U.N.'s special representative in Iraq and a key player in efforts to rebuild the war-torn nation.

But the destruction of U.N. headquarters was more than just the worst attack on the U.N. in its history. To many observers, the strike at the very heart of U.N. efforts in Iraq symbolized the political battering the 59-year-old organization has been taking lately.

"They've been getting it from all sides," says Stephen Zunes, an associate professor of politics at the University of San Francisco. "The right in the United States thinks the U.N. is irrelevant and that the U.S. doesn't need it, while a lot of people on the left don't want it legitimizing what the U.S. has done in Iraq."

The Iraq war severely strained relations between the U.N. and its most important member, the United States. After months of bitter debate between America and other permanent Security Council members — notably France and Russia — the United



Thai members of a United Nations peacekeeping force in East Timor participate in a ceremony marking the handover of authority to the new country's military in July 2002. U.N. intervention in the former Indonesian province ended with the creation of a stable, new state, a rare success for the organization.

States and Britain invaded Iraq without U.N. authorization. Moreover, after toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, President Bush made it clear he envisioned only a limited U.N. role in rebuilding Iraq.¹

The war and its aftermath have prompted many, Bush included, to question whether the United Nations — founded at the end of World War II to promote global security through dialogue and consensus — can still play a significant geopolitical role in the world following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"When it comes to the U.N. and issues of security, the world is moving on," says Daniel Goure, vice president of the Lexington Institute, a defense and foreign policy think tank.

"The major centers of power either act unilaterally or within the context of regional alliances like NATO — not the U.N."

Even U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has questioned whether his organization can remain relevant in the new world of terrorists and rogue states with weapons of mass destruction — a world in which U.N. members like the U.S. and Britain feel justified in launching pre-emptive attacks without the organization's blessing.

"We have come to a fork in the road," Annan told the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 23. "We must decide whether . . . to continue on the basis agreed upon or whether radical changes are needed."

Many U.N. critics say radical changes are indeed needed, starting with the organization's all-important Security Council, which has the power to authorize sanctions or even military action. Critics say the council's permanent members — the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China — reflect bygone geopolitical realities. Only if important countries like India and Japan became permanent members would the council truly reflect today's world, they say.

Other critics trace many of the U.N.'s problems to its charter, specifically Article 51 — which allows nations to defend themselves if attacked. They say it is an anachronism in an era when terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) could leave millions dead in an instant.

"We need to redraft the charter" to give nations more freedom to respond to these new threats, says Nile Gardiner,

Most U.N. Peacekeepers Serve in Africa

The oldest U.N. peacekeeping operation — in the Middle East — was deployed in 1948, soon after the creation of Israel. Today, 70 percent of the U.N.'s 55,000 peacekeepers are deployed in Africa.

Current U.N. Peacekeeping Operations

Location	Date Begun	Total U.N. personnel deployed (military and civilian)
Middle East	1948	367
India/Pakistan	1949	115
Cyprus	1964	1,402
Golan Heights	1974	1,162
Lebanon	1978	2,406
Western Sahara	1991	497
Georgia	1993	408
Kosovo	1999	7,570
Sierra Leone	1999	12,527
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1999	12,068
Ethiopia/Eritrea	2000	4,498
East Timor	2002	3,369
Liberia	2003	8,994

Source: U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations

a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

But others counter that countries would merely use an expanded charter to justify military action against one another. "What would keep us from just whacking each other whenever we felt like it?" responds William J. Durch, a senior associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, a national-security think tank.

U.N. peacekeeping efforts also have come under fire. In particular, critics have questioned the organization's ability to enforce its own treaty outlawing genocide. Genocide has killed more than 20 million people worldwide since the U.N.'s founding in 1945, according to Gregory Stanton, president of Genocide Watch and coordinator of the International Campaign to End Genocide.

"The United Nations has been ineffective in preventing genocide," because its members "wave the flag of national sovereignty whenever anyone challenges their 'domestic jurisdiction,'" he writes.² Such criticisms were raised in the 1990s, when U.N. troops failed to stop the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo.

More recently, the organization's ability to stop the proliferation of WMDs, especially nuclear weapons, also has come under scrutiny.

But it was the U.N.'s unwillingness to sanction an invasion of Iraq, many critics say, that most seriously undercut its credibility, especially after the overthrow of Hussein revealed that the regime had tortured and murdered hundreds of thousands of civilians. The

U.N. can only regain credibility — both as a political player and protector of human rights — if it returns to Iraq in a significant political and humanitarian capacity, critics say.

Tentative steps in this direction have been taken by both the United States and the U.N. On Jan. 19, the U.S. administrator in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer III, traveled to U.N. headquarters in New York to personally ask Annan to send a team to Iraq to assess the prospects for direct elections before the United States turns over power to local authorities on June 30. On Feb. 7, a U.N. team went to Baghdad and spent almost a week trying to resolve disagreements among Iraqi political leaders over upcoming elections.

But some observers think the world body should play more than an advisory role and that the United States should turn over significant amounts of authority to U.N. officials now. "The U.N. should be put in control of the whole political process immediately, replacing Bremer and the Americans," says Robert Boorstin, senior vice president for national security and international policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank. "They have the most experience at policing, reconstruction and institution-building."

Others say the U.N. has a mixed record on nation-building and would likely fail in Iraq — a large country plagued by ethnic tensions and a low-level insurgency. "It would be a disaster," Goure says. "The U.N. bureaucracy has a slow and consensual style of decision making, which would make everything much harder to accomplish in a country that needs things to move forward quickly and decisively."

Meanwhile, the decades-old battle over differing perceptions of what the U.N. can and cannot accomplish continues — a Catch-22 situation prophetically recognized by the first secretary-general, Trygve Lie.

"Some have too great expectations and others too little faith in what the United Nations can do," he once said.³

Not surprisingly, some foreign policy experts today say the United Nations will become increasingly irrelevant while others predict it will play a much greater role in promoting peace and security.

As U.N.-watchers ponder the organization's future role in the world, here are some of the questions they are asking:

Should the Security Council be expanded to include new members?

The Security Council is the most important arm of the United Nations grappling with vital issues of war and peace. It dispatches peacekeepers to war-torn countries and authorizes economic and other sanctions and even military action against aggressors. And unlike General Assembly resolutions, those passed by the Security Council are binding.

When the U.N. was established shortly before the end of World War II, the principal victors in the conflict — the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and China — became the council's five permanent members, each with veto power over all decisions. Six non-permanent members were to be elected by the General Assembly to two-year terms.

Nearly 60 years later, that system remains largely in place — changed only once, in 1965, when the number of non-permanent members was increased from six to 10. The same five permanent members — called the P5 — still preside over the body.

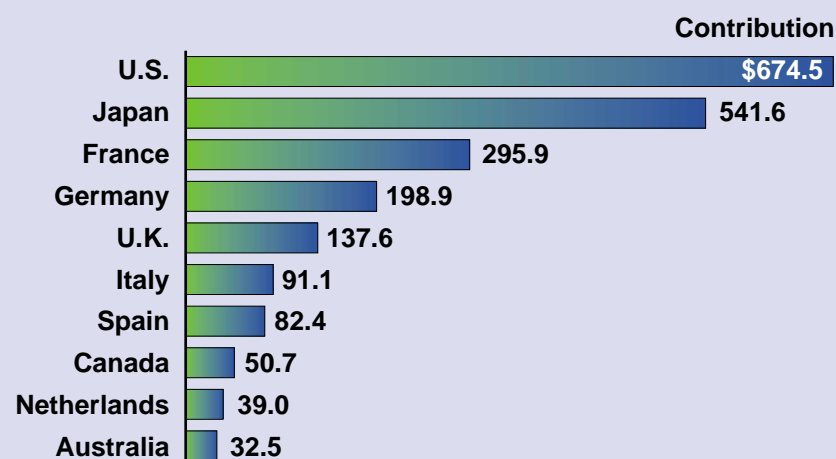
For decades, Security Council critics have said the arrangement is out of date. "The current council in no way reflects the reality of today's world," says Boorstin of the Center for American Progress. "We don't need representation exactly according to [current] population and geography, but we need some new, realistic approximation of the two."

Rich Countries Pay, Poor Ones Send Troops

Developed countries — led by the United States — largely pay for U.N. peacekeeping (top graph), but the troops themselves primarily come from the Third World (bottom). The current peacekeeping budget is \$2.17 billion.

Largest Contributors to U.N. Peacekeeping Operations

(in 2002, in \$ millions)



Major Personnel Contributions to U.N. Peacekeeping Forces *

(as of Dec. 31, 2003)

Country	% of U.N. Total	Country	% of U.N. Total
Pakistan	13.6%	Jordan	4.0%
Bangladesh	10.3	South Africa	3.1
Nigeria	7.3	Ethiopia	2.3
India	6.3	U.K.	1.2
Ghana	5.0	U.S.	1.1
Nepal	5.0	Germany	0.8

* Includes troops, civilian police and military observers.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations

A new Security Council should at least include some economic or regional powers as new permanent members, Boorstin says. India, the world's largest democracy, could easily represent South Asia, and Japan and Germany — the world's second- and third-largest economies — also should be included. In addition, mammoth

Brazil could be Latin America's representative while important Muslim and African countries could represent those peoples, he suggests.

Adding new permanent members also would renew the U.N.'s standing in the world, supporters of expansion argue. "For the council to be credible in the world today, it has to include

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the real powers of the world,” the Lexington Institute’s Goure says.

Bringing on new members would also facilitate more cooperation in solving international crises, say others.

“Things are so difficult today partly because those who feel excluded are less cooperative than they otherwise might be,” says Johanna Mendelson-Forman, senior program officer for peace, security and human rights at the U.N. Foundation. “These countries could use their energies more productively. They wouldn’t be spoilers like they often are now.”

But Tom Weiss, a professor of political science at Columbia University, thinks new permanent members would “cripple the council with infighting,” because existing permanent members won’t want to give up power.

Indeed, deciding who would get the new permanent slots would “[tick] off a lot of countries that didn’t make it,” agrees the Stimson Center’s Dorch. “You’re going to end up with a lot of resentment, and nobody’s going to win.”

Others say it is in America’s interest to maintain the status quo. “Bringing in the countries they always point to — like India, Brazil and Indonesia — means there will

simply be more members who are likely to oppose the United States and Britain,” says the Heritage Foundation’s Gardiner.

Finally, even if agreement could be reached on new members, the larger council would be too big to be effective, expansion opponents say. “This would make it much harder to get anything done,” Weiss says. “Adding new members translates into adding new agendas and interests, and this would become even more unwieldy than it is now.”



The United Nations’ distinctive headquarters was built in New York City in 1953. The U.N. was founded in 1945 in the wake of both World War II and the failed League of Nations.

AFP Photo/Don Emmert

Should the U.N. change its charter to broaden a nation’s right to self-defense?

During Security Council debates before the Iraq war, the United States and its allies sought authorization to depose Hussein for his violations of more than a dozen U.N. resolutions passed since the end of the first Persian Gulf War in 1991. Chief among them was Resolution 1441 — which called on Iraq to dismantle its alleged weapons of mass destruction.

But, in making its case for war to the American people and the world community, the Bush administration also argued that Iraq posed a threat to the region and, ultimately, to the United States. Indeed, since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the administration has repeatedly argued that it has the right to take pre-emptive action, alone if necessary, against any potential

threat to the country’s safety.

“America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country,” President Bush said in his State of the Union address on Jan. 20, 2004.

However, the U.N. charter requires member states to “refrain from the threat or use of force” and to settle international disputes by peaceful means.⁴ Military force is allowed — under Article 51 — only when a nation is threatened or attacked and is acting in self-defense.

Secretary-General Annan argues that by ignoring the letter and spirit of Article 51, the United States and its allies have made the world more dangerous, because now other nations will justify pre-emptive strikes against other countries by claiming they posed potential threats.

"If nations discount the legitimacy provided by the U.N. and feel they can and must use force unilaterally and pre-emptively, the world will become even more dangerous," Annan told the General Assembly on Sept. 23, 2003.⁵

But critics of Article 51 say the U.N. does not offer countries the right to deal with threats *before* they become imminent — an approach the critics say is more appropriate in the dangerous environment that has emerged since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "If we wait for threats to materialize," Bush said, "we will have waited too long."⁶

The Heritage Foundation's Gardiner agrees. "We are now living in an age of international terrorism and rogue states, but that's not reflected in Article 51," he says. The article should be updated to allow nations "to attack countries that harbor terrorists," Gardiner says. "This has to be explicit."

"This debate is not about terrorists or even weapons of mass destruction," adds the Lexington Institute's Goure. "It's about failed states that allow terrorists to thrive. Terrorists cannot be effective without access to state assets — like banks, training bases and laboratories to develop weapons."

According to Goure, countries should be allowed to take "anticipatory self-defense" actions against entities that might threaten them. "This needs to be written simply and directly" into the U.N. charter, he says.

But Columbia University's Weiss counters that Article 51 already has evolved to encompass new global realities. "The U.N. charter — like the

U.S. Constitution — is a living document that changes with the times," Weiss says. "No one, not even international lawyers, dispute the fact that Article 51 now gives you a right to pre-emptively defend yourself if you're threatened. But that has always meant that a verifiable threat is pointed in your direction."

Christopher Preble, director of foreign policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, notes, "The United Nations wouldn't have opposed our intervention in Iraq if the majority of member states believed that Iraq was a threat to the U.S. That was the problem: They didn't believe that we were genuinely threatened."

Indeed, the Stimson Center's Dorch points out, the Security Council had no qualms about authorizing American action against Afghanistan. "It came under the purview of Article 51 and was fine, because, in this case, the United States had legitimately been threatened."⁷

Should the U.N. have a greater role in running Iraq?

Even before the fall of Baghdad, debate had begun over the U.N.'s role in postwar Iraq. President Bush said he favored a "vital" role for the international body, but the administration ultimately decided its primary responsibility should be to deliver humanitarian assistance. Britain — America's primary ally in the war — wanted the U.N. to help build political and other institutions while the French, Russians and others — who had opposed the war — argued for direct U.N. administration of the country.

Last May, it was agreed that a U.N. special representative would be sent to Baghdad to assist in reconstruction efforts. Although his job description was not entirely spelled out, de Mello quickly found ways to meaningfully aid reconstruction efforts.⁸ Most notably, he helped create the Iraqi governing council, convincing

American administrator Bremer to grant the 25-person body greater authority.

Then came the Aug. 19 attack on U.N. headquarters, leading Annan to withdraw all non-Iraqi staff. After the U.N. elections team visited Baghdad in February, there was talk of U.N. staff returning to Iraq, but nothing has been decided.

Some U.N. supporters say the only way for Iraq to evolve into a stable, democratic state is for the United States to hand over day-to-day authority to the United Nations. "It seems more and more necessary all the time," says the University of San Francisco's Zunes. "Things are getting worse, with even the Shiite community — which has been quiescent until now — getting more restless. It's time to bring in someone else to do the job."

The Center for American Progress' Boorstin agrees. "The U.N. should be given control of the whole political process," he says. "If we had done this earlier, many fewer Americans would be dead, and the American taxpayer wouldn't be footing the bill for reconstruction."

Indeed, Boorstin says, the United Nations is better suited to nation-building than the U.S.-led coalition running the country, partly because Iraqis perceive it as more even-handed and trustworthy. "No institution is completely trusted by Iraqis, but the United Nations is trusted more than any other," he says.

"The U.N. still has a lot of legitimacy in Iraq," agrees Dorch. "After all, they kept about half the country's population alive for more than a decade with their oil-for-food program." Established after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the program embargoed oil exports except to finance food and medicine imports.

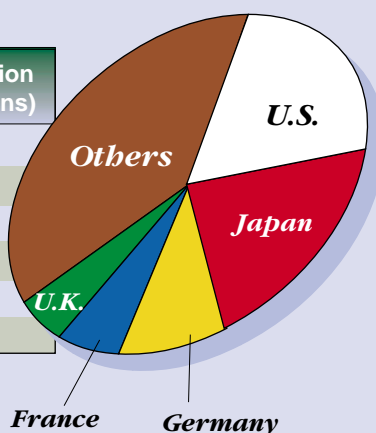
Moreover, he adds, if the United Nations had a greater role in rebuilding Iraq, it would unleash a flood of

U.S. and Japan Contribute the Most

Five countries contribute 63 percent of the U.N.'s \$1.6 billion annual budget, with the United States and Japan paying almost 43 percent of the total.

Largest Contributors to the U.N. Budget* (in 2003)

Contributor	Percent of Budget	Contribution (in \$millions)
U.S.	22.0 %	\$341
Japan	19.5	303
Germany	9.8	152
France	6.5	100
UK	5.5	86
Others	37.4	587



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

** Peacekeeping funds not included. The United States and Japan are also the largest contributors to the peacekeeping budget, which currently is \$2.17 billion.*

Sources: United Nations; U.S. Census Bureau; Global Policy Forum

additional outside help now being withheld because the U.N. isn't involved.

"The U.N. isn't just the U.N., it's the whole U.N. system," Durch says. "So when they come in, they bring in the NGOs [non-governmental organizations], and they do a lot of the work on the ground. They also bring the World Bank with them, and that means there will be a lot of money to spend."

But getting the United Nations more involved would significantly slow down the hand-over of power to the Iraqis, opponents of the idea say. "The United Nations, by its nature, is a very slow and cumbersome organization because it is a government of governments," says Cato's Preble. "Decisions will be made by committee, and

you're going find yourself with too many cooks spoiling the broth, so it will inevitably be less effective than the U.S."

Others contend that — based on its experience with nation-building elsewhere — the United Nations simply can't deal with the kinds of potentially explosive issues that could erupt. "You have a lot of immediate, right and wrong issues that pop up, but the U.N. doesn't have the political inclination to handle them because they are trying to treat all sides equally," Goure says. "In Bosnia, you had the U.N. trying to balance three ethnic groups — Serb, Croat and Muslim — to the point of not moving effectively to stop the Serbs [from committing genocide]." As a result,

he adds "you had things like the massacre at Srebrenica," where an estimated 10,000 Muslim men and boys were executed.

The same scenario could unfold in Iraq, Goure says, where three major ethnic and religious groups — the Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs — are jockeying for power. "If the U.N. replaced Bremer, they would have much less strength and inclination to keep these groups apart, and the chances for ethnic conflict would be much greater."

Finally, some observers disagree that Iraqis would view the United Nations as evenhanded or trustworthy. "The U.N. really isn't liked or seen as part of the solution by most people in Iraq," largely because of its role in imposing and administering the post-Gulf War sanctions, says Edward Luck, director of the Center on International Organizations at Columbia University.

Indeed, the U.N.'s comprehensive economic sanctions (which were partially softened by the oil-for-food program) took a heavy toll on the country's civilian population.

"For the Iraqis, foreigners are foreigners, whether they are wearing the blue helmets of U.N. peacekeepers or the patch of the 82nd Airborne," Preble adds. "They'll be seen as occupiers, just like the U.S. is today." ■

BACKGROUND

Outgrowth of War

The United Nations arose from the ashes of the failed League of Nations and the devastation of World War II.

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Kofi Annan's U.N. Balancing Act

When Kofi Annan became the U.N.'s seventh secretary-general in early 1997, he quickly found himself in the midst of a crisis.

The organization was on the brink of bankruptcy, in part because the United States and other key members were refusing to pay their back dues. The United States alone had withheld \$1.6 billion in funds, largely in an effort to pressure the institution — which many Americans saw as wasteful and corrupt — to reform itself.

Annan responded by immediately traveling to Washington to lobby Congress, promising to trim staff and spending. Annan's reform plan, combined with his personal charm, won the support of even the U.N.'s toughest critics on Capitol Hill, including Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and prompted the United States to pay the bulk of its dues.

But those first few months were merely a warm-up for the challenges he was to face in the years ahead, from "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo to the bitter debate over the invasion of Iraq.

"You're always dealing with crisis, and some country or countries are always upset with you, and then you always have to placate the U.S. and other big powers," says Stephen C. Schlesinger, director of the World Policy Institute at New School University in New York City and author of *Acts of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*. "No doubt: It's a tough job."

"It's a Catch-22 kind of job," says Johanna Mendelson-Forman, a senior program officer at the U.N. Foundation. "You're the most powerful man in the world with limited resources, which can be very frustrating."

Despite the challenges, the 66-year-old Ghanaian generally gets high marks from U.N.-watchers.

"He's the best secretary-general since Dag Hammarskjöld" of Sweden, Schlesinger says. "He's been able to restore the U.N.'s moral authority by bringing people together and stressing the original ideals of the U.N."

"He's an extremely patient and calm man, which is needed in that job," Mendelson-Forman says. "Also, he's a creature of the system, which means that he knows all about the U.N.'s internal problems and understands its great potential."

Annan was a popular and respected senior U.N. officer when he was elected to the post in 1996 as a compromise candidate after a bitter battle between the United States and

France over whether the controversial Egyptian diplomat Boutros Boutros-Gali, should serve a second term.

During his tenure, Annan has worked hard to heal the rift that developed in the last few decades between the U.N. and its most important member: the United States. Most recently, he went against the advice of his own staff and, in response to a request from President Bush, sent a high-level representative, Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, to Iraq to assess the country's political future.

"He understands that he basically doesn't have any choice but to try to keep the United States happy, since the U.N. is so dependent on the U.S. for money and other things," says Frederick D. Barton, a senior adviser at the Center for International and Strategic Studies' International Security Program.

On occasion, however, Annan has opposed the United States and other big powers. "In 1999, for instance, he said the need for humanitarian intervention in places like Bosnia and Rwanda overrode national sovereignty — something the United States was not comfortable with," Schlesinger says.

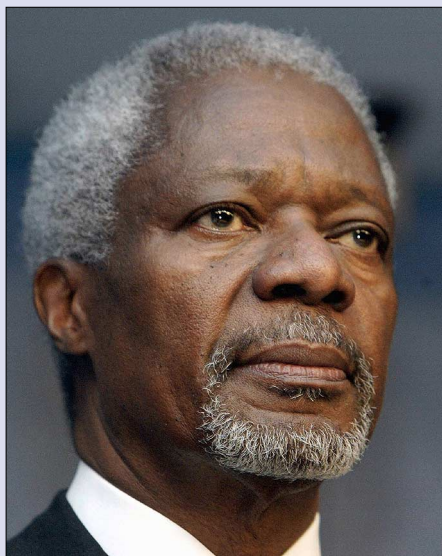
More recently, in a speech to the General Assembly last November, Annan chided the United States for unilaterally attacking Iraq. At the same time, he criticized opponents of the war — and the U.N. itself — for not adequately taking America's legitimate security concerns into account. "He's good, very good, at balancing interests," Barton says. "That's one of his great strengths."

After Annan joined the U.N. in 1962 as a budget analyst for the World Health Organization, he quickly moved up the U.N. ladder — taking a break in 1972 to obtain a master's degree in management

from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He became under-secretary for peacekeeping in 1993.

His three-year tenure as head of peacekeeping coincided with one of the most active periods in U.N. peacekeeping history, with blue helmets deployed in Bosnia, Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda, among others. At one point in 1995, the under-secretary was overseeing 70,000 military and civilian personnel from 77 countries.¹

Annan's term ends in 2006, and he says he will not seek a third term. Still, Schlesinger says, "it's not impossible to imagine the big powers asking him to stay on one more term, since he's so well respected. Given the divisions at the U.N. right now, they may just be looking for someone they can all agree upon."



U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

AFP Photo/Gerard Cerles

¹ Figure cited in the secretary-general's official biography at www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1997/sg_biography.html.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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The league, established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, was the world's first attempt to prevent war by creating an international forum to air grievances. But the U.S. Senate refused to ratify America's membership, and without U.S. support the league soon became ineffective.

In 1931, Japan left the league after invading Manchuria in northern China. Germany withdrew in 1933, the year Adolf Hitler came to power. And in 1937, Italy left after the organization condemned its unprovoked invasion of Ethiopia.

Germany, Japan and Italy, of course, were the primary "Axis powers" responsible for the Second World War. Although the league continued to function after the war began in 1939, it had little impact.

The notion of replacing the league with something more effective emerged two years before the war ended, in 1943, when the major allies — the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and China — began discussing proposals for a new international body.

Problems that arose during the talks foreshadowed many of the issues that would arise later: The Soviets were wary of a body that might block its own geopolitical ambitions, and Britain worried such an institution might try to control its many colonies.

But President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed the negotiations forward. Although he died in April 1945 — less than two weeks before the allies were to meet in San Francisco to hammer out a final agreement — the new president, Harry S. Truman, strongly supported the project, and a final accord emerged.

All 51 nations attending the San Francisco negotiations ratified the new U.N. charter on Oct. 24. Its primary goal was "saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war," promoting fundamental human rights, es-

tablishing "justice and respect" for international law and treaties and working for "social progress."⁹

The General Assembly — comprised of all U.N. members, each with one vote — was given responsibility for overseeing operations and considering non-binding resolutions on international issues. The Security Council was charged with maintaining international peace, authorizing economic and military sanctions and approving the use of force to restore peace.

The five major World War II victors — the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China — were designated as veto-wielding permanent members of the council, to ensure that every council decision was supported by the globe's strongest nations. The General Assembly elected the council's six non-permanent members — increased to 10 in 1965 — to two-year terms.

The assembly met for the first time on Jan. 10, 1946, in London. "It is in your hands to make or mar the happiness of millions yet unborn," King George VI told the delegates. "It is for you to lay the foundations of a new world where such a conflict as that which lately brought our world to the verge of annihilation must never be repeated."¹⁰

Early Tests

The new organization's first test, in 1947, involved the fate of British-ruled Palestine, which was claimed by both Arabs and Jews. A fierce debate ensued over whether to create an Arab-Jewish federation, favored by Arab states, or to partition the country into ethnic enclaves, which the United States favored.

The U.N.'s decision in 1948 to partition prompted the first of several regional wars between Jews and Arabs.¹¹ After Israel repelled the attacking Arabs and established a new state, U.N. "mil-

itary observers" went to the Middle East to monitor the cease-fire between Israel and its neighbors. Their mission continues to this day in the Golan Heights, Egypt and along the border of Israel and Lebanon.¹²

The U.N.'s next big test occurred in Korea, where U.S.-Soviet Cold War rivalry had split the country into the communist north and pro-Western south. Although the superpowers eventually agreed to withdraw from the Korean peninsula, the Soviets left behind a well-armed, North Korean army that invaded the south in 1950.¹³

The United States and its allies condemned the invasion, and the U.N. authorized an international force to defend the south. The resulting Korean War dragged on for three years, with U.N. forces trading huge swaths of territory several times with the north and its Chinese communist allies. The war ended in 1953 with Korea still divided.¹⁴

Secretary-General Lie declared the Korean War a triumph for collective security, but others said it proved the U.N.'s ineffectiveness. Indeed, many Americans argued an international organization could not deal with communism — the major threat of the day — and that the United States should develop regional alliances to meet the challenge.

In 1956, the United Nations enjoyed its first real triumph as a peacemaker. Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal, taking control from Britain. The British, along with France and Israel, attacked and retook the canal, but the United States condemned the action.

The legendary Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld — who coined the term "peacekeeping" — stepped into the stalemate and proposed that U.N. troops supervise a truce. The allies withdrew, and 6,000 lightly armed U.N. soldiers from 10 countries took up positions between Israeli and Egyptian troops along their borders. The force remained until May 1967.

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Chronology

1940s *United Nations is founded in the closing days of World War II.*

June 26, 1945

Delegates from 51 countries sign the U.N. charter; it is formally approved on Oct. 24.

1948

U.N. observers monitor a shaky cease-fire between newly independent Israel and its Arab neighbors.

1950s-1980s

Cold War rivalry hampers but does not entirely quash U.N. efforts to promote peace and security.

June 25, 1950

U.N. authorizes a U.S.-led international force to help defend South Korea after communist North Korea invades.

November 1956

The first U.N. peacekeepers are sent to the Suez Canal to monitor a cease-fire between Israel and Egypt.

1957

International Atomic Energy Agency is founded with U.N. support to promote the peaceful use of nuclear power.

July 14, 1960

The first large-scale U.N. peace-keeping force is sent to Congo, where independence from Belgium has led to civil unrest.

1965

U.N. peacekeepers begin patrolling the India-Pakistan border following warfare over the disputed Kashmir region.

Nov. 29, 1982

U.N. General Assembly condemns Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan.

Oct. 25, 1983

United States invades Grenada without seeking Security Council authorization.

1990s-Present

Cold War ends, leading to increased U.N. peacekeeping operations.

1990

Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait prompts Security Council on Nov. 29 to authorize intervention by an American-led coalition.

1991

Coalition forces liberate Kuwait. . . . U.N. arms inspectors search Iraq for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) as part of a postwar peace agreement; none are found.

1993

U.N. sends 28,000 peacekeepers to Somalia to alleviate famine and restore order during a civil war. U.S. and other casualties lead to a U.N. withdrawal in 1995.

1994

Almost 1 million civilians die in ethnic fighting in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis. A small U.N. force in the country takes no action.

1995

U.N. efforts to establish "safe havens" in Bosnia to prevent genocide fail as Serbs overrun Srebrenica and kill thousands of civilians.

1996

Kofi Annan, a U.N. official from

Ghana, is elected secretary-general.

1998

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein expels U.N. weapons inspectors.

1999

NATO intervenes in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo without seeking U.N. Security Council authorization.

Sept. 12, 2002

President Bush addresses the General Assembly on WMDs and Iraq and challenges the U.N. to be "relevant."

March 22, 2003

United States and Great Britain lead an invasion of Iraq without seeking Security Council authorization, toppling Hussein's regime in a month.

Aug. 1, 2003

Security Council passes a resolution authorizing the dispatch of U.N. peacekeepers to Liberia.

Aug. 19, 2003

Suicide bomber destroys U.N. headquarters in Baghdad killing U.N. Representative Sergio Viera de Mello and 21 other people.

Nov. 23, 2003

President Bush returns to the U.N. to ask the international community to assist in rebuilding Iraq.

Feb. 7, 2004

Secretary-General Annan sends a U.N. team to Baghdad to assess the prospects for direct elections.

June 30, 2004

United States is scheduled to turn over sovereignty in Iraq to Iraqi authorities.

Dec. 31, 2006

Secretary-General Annan's second term ends.

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In the following decades, U.N. peacekeepers were involved in several other conflicts. In 1962, 20,000 so-called blue helmets were dispatched to newly independent Congo to restore order and supervise the withdrawal of Belgian troops. Three years later, peacekeepers took up positions along the India-Pakistan border, after the two countries fought a war over the Indian province of Kashmir. Later missions included Cyprus, Namibia and Sri Lanka.

But Cold War rivalries severely hampered the U.N.'s peacekeeping success. Although the United States largely dominated the organization, the Soviets repeatedly vetoed Security Council resolutions authorizing interventions, resulting in U.N. missions that were too narrowly defined to be effective.

During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the United Nations did little to halt civil wars in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and El Salvador, which were often seen as surrogate struggles in the Cold War, because the two superpowers supported the opposing sides.

New World Order

In the late 1980s, the geopolitical situation started to change as communist governments in the Soviet Union and its client states began collapsing. By the early 1990s, the Cold War rivalry that long had dominated inter-

national relations was gone, and the United States emerged as the world's sole superpower.

President George Bush, the current president's father, declared a "new world order" based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. His rhetoric was soon put to the test when Iraq invaded and occupied



The U.N. Security Council, which can impose economic sanctions and authorize military action, has five permanent members — the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. Reformers say other great powers, like India and Japan, should be added to the exclusive club to reflect contemporary global realities.

AFP Photo/Mark Garten

Kuwait in August 1990. Bush quickly sought an international coalition at the United Nations that drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait in early 1991.

Many saw the Persian Gulf War as the beginning of a new, bold era for the United Nations. As historian William Jay Jacobs notes in his book *Search for Peace*: "Although leadership [in the Gulf War] undoubtedly came from Washington, it was the United Nations that had broadened the wartime alliance, even isolating Iraq from most of the Arab world. In a major way, the United Nations had served as a unifying force, bringing together nations of widely different backgrounds — including former communist govern-

ments — for the task of armed peacekeeping." ¹⁵

Around this time, the U.N. began taking on greater peacekeeping and nation-building challenges. From 1988 to 1993, it established 14 new peacekeeping efforts — more than in its first four decades. In 1992 alone, the number of blue helmets in the field quadrupled, along with peacekeeping expenses, which grew from \$700 million to \$2.8 billion. ¹⁶

The role of peacekeepers also began to change. Past U.N. forces had been deployed to keep opposing armies apart following cease-fires. Now, U.N. forces were entering ongoing conflicts in war-torn countries like Cambodia, Somalia and Bosnia.

But the peacekeepers were unable to establish stability in any of the conflicts. In Somalia, for instance, 28,000 U.N. forces (including Americans) could not stop the violence between rival clans that had brought chaos

and famine to the East African nation. While the U.N. efforts did alleviate the devastating famine, attempts in 1993 to end the civil war resulted in some 18 U.S. fatalities and prompted the withdrawal of the entire peacekeeping mission by 1995. ¹⁷

Genocide and the U.N.

A genocidal civil war that began in Bosnia in 1992 also proved intractable for the United Nations. A European-led U.N. force proved unwilling to stand up to Serbian troops, who murdered tens of thousands of ethnic Muslims. A tenuous cease-fire

took hold in 1995, only after American-led NATO military forces intervened in the wake of an international outcry.

"In places like Bosnia and Somalia, you had active civil wars going on and the U.N. just wasn't equipped to deal with all of that," says the Stimson Center's Durch. "There was a shortage of troops and money, and an overage of optimism that led to the problems on these missions."

Optimism eventually turned to fatigue, both at the United Nations and in the international community. When another ethnic conflict erupted in the central African nation of Rwanda in 1994, the U.N. and its members reacted without energy or commitment.

A small group of U.N. peacekeepers had been sent to Rwanda at the end of 1993 to quell rising ethnic tensions, but they could not prevent the wholesale slaughter the following year. Indeed, U.N. troops stood aside as an estimated 800,000 mostly Tutsi Rwandans were massacred by the Hutu majority.

Four years later, on his first visit to Rwanda since the genocide, Secretary-General Annan — after touring gravesites and buildings filled with victims' skulls — apologized for his organization's inaction. "Now we know that what we did was not nearly enough," he said, "not enough to save Rwanda from itself, not enough to honor the ideals for which the United Nations exists."¹⁸

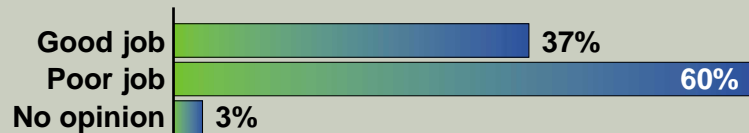
President Bill Clinton later echoed Annan's apology: "We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We did not immediately call these crimes by their right name: genocide."¹⁹

The Security Council later established international tribunals to prosecute war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Bosnia and Rwanda. But the U.N.'s earlier inaction raised serious questions as to whether it is able or willing to act before mass murders happen. The U.N. Conven-

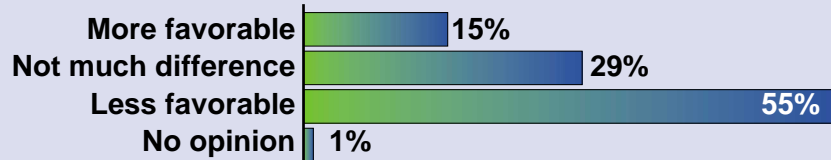
How Americans Rate the U.N.

Sixty percent of the Americans polled last August thought the United Nations was doing a poor job, but 61 percent wanted to either continue its funding at current levels or increase it.

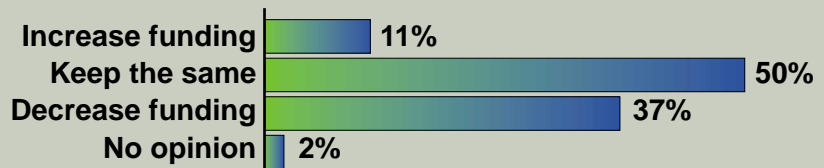
Do you think the United Nations is doing a good job or a poor job in trying to solve the problems it has had to face?



Earlier this year, the Security Council did not support the invasion of Iraq. Did that make you have a more favorable view of the U.N. or a less favorable view?



Do you think the United States should increase its funding of the United Nations, keep it the same, or decrease it?



Source: CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, conducted Aug. 25-26, 2003.

tion on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide — established after Nazi Germany's atrocities during World War II — requires its 129 signatory countries to intervene to halt genocide if they determine that it is occurring.

Criticism about the U.N.'s slowness in responding to atrocities erupted again in 1999, when evidence emerged of "ethnic cleansing" by the Serbians against Albanians in Kosovo. "It is

right to stop the ethnic cleansing, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other indicators of genocide that we see," Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright said in April 1999.²⁰

Although the Security Council passed several resolutions demanding the hostilities in Kosovo cease, it did not step in to stop the slaughter, which continued. Once again, NATO bypassed the Security Council and launched an American-led bombing

U.S.-U.N. Relationship Has Ups, Downs

The recent dispute over America's decision to go to war with Iraq was not the first time the United States and the United Nations have been at loggerheads. In recent decades, the two have sparred on issues ranging from the Kyoto treaty on global warming to U.N. family-planning programs.

Some observers find the tension surprising, even ironic, since the United Nations is largely an American creation, established despite Soviet and British ambivalence about creating a successor to the failed League of Nations.

But Stephen C. Schlesinger, author of *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*, sees no contradiction between U.S. attitudes then and now. The United Nations "was bound to clash with our need to get our own way," he says. "We're the biggest guy on the block, and naturally we don't want to be restricted or limited by anyone else — including the U.N."

Johanna Mendelson-Forman, senior program officer for peace, security and human rights at the U.N. Foundation, agrees. "The U.S. doesn't want to be constrained by the U.N., and it doesn't want to live up to some of the international obligations we made in the past," she says.

Yet others blame the nature of the institution. "The United Nations is wedded to the Cold War model of preserving the balance of power between the U.S. and Soviets," says Thomas Donnelly, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute who studies defense and foreign policy issues. "But times have changed. Although we don't live in a multipolar world anymore, the U.N. is still acting like we do."

According to Donnelly, the world body should help America, not block it. "The United States is the most effective agent for peace and order in the world today," he says. "The U.N. should be trying to support U.S. goals, not just in Iraq and the Middle East, but elsewhere too, as we work to open markets and bring democracy."

Others say that as decolonization in the 1950s and '60s brought more and more new members from the developing world into the United Nations family, the institution became less amenable to America's interests. In addition, right-wing and white-supremacist militia groups in America have long seen the United Nations as bent on dismantling the United States in favor of a world government. And anti-abortionists have attacked the institution's family-planning efforts.¹

In recent years, several issues have produced new U.N.-U.S. friction. In the 1990s, the two sparred over U.N. efforts — or lack of them, critics said — to reform its large bureaucracy. In fact, Congress refused to pay its back dues until the U.N. adopted reforms, a tactic it has used more than once to force policy changes.² Eventually, the United States paid the bulk of

its back dues, after the U.N. cut its staff and improved efficiency.

In 2002, the United States withheld \$34 million in funds earmarked for the U.N. Population Fund, which promotes family planning in the developing world. Anti-abortionists in America argued that the fund supports China's one-child population program, which critics say forces women to have abortions. In defending the move, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "After careful consideration, we came to the conclusion that U.N. Population Fund moneys go to Chinese agencies that support coercive abortions."³

But Secretary-General Kofi Annan denied there was coercion. "We have made it clear [the fund] does not go around encouraging abortions," he said.⁴

The U.S. government also rejected the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, a U.N.-sponsored treaty designed to reduce global emissions of "greenhouse" gases believed to cause global warming. The protocol required the United States to reduce its emissions by 7 percent by 2008 compared with 1990 levels.⁵

While American officials helped negotiate the treaty, President Bill Clinton did little to promote it before a hostile U.S. Senate, which feared it would severely slow economic growth. President Bush, similarly concerned about its economic impact, rejected the document soon after taking office in 2001.

"Bush, by dismissing Kyoto and the whole Kyoto process, is really dismissing the United Nations and the international community," says Kert Davies, research director of Greenpeace U.S.A., an environmental advocacy group. "He's done incalculable damage to the [U.N.] and the environment."

Still, some experts say that for all their differences, the U.N. and United States have a more cooperative and productive relationship than appearances would indicate. After all, the United States still provides the largest share — 22 percent — of the U.N.'s annual budget.

"The U.S. supports the U.N. a lot more than people think," Mendelson-Forman says. "In areas like refugee assistance, food aid and health care, the U.S. and U.N. work very closely and very well together."

¹ For background, see Mary H. Cooper, "United Nations at 50," *The CQ Researcher*, April 18, 1995, pp. 729-752.

² *Ibid.*

³ Quoted in "U.S. to Withhold Family Planning Funds, CNN.com, www.cnn.com/2002/US/07/22/un.funds/. For background, see Mary H. Cooper, "Population and the Environment," *The CQ Researcher*, July 17, 1998, pp. 601-624.

⁴ Quoted in CNN, *op. cit.*

⁵ For background, see Mary H. Cooper, "Global Warming," *The CQ Researcher*, Jan. 26, 2001, pp. 41-64.

campaign in March, which brought the Serbians to the peace table three months later. The NATO countries did

not seek U.N. authorization for the bombings because they knew permanent Security Council members

China and Russia — which have been accused of ethnic atrocities in Tibet and Chechnya — would veto the plan.

"If military intervention is used against a country for a human rights issue, that will create a very bad precedent for the world," Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji said. "With that, people will wonder whether foreign powers should take military actions" against China over ethnic issues in Tibet.²¹

Frustrated with the U.N.'s marginalization in the Kosovo affair, Annan criticized both the Security Council's "inaction in the face of genocide" and NATO's unauthorized action. "Unless the Security Council is restored to its pre-eminent position as the sole source of legitimacy on the use of force," Annan said, "we are on a dangerous path to anarchy."²²

After the peace accord, NATO and Russian peacekeepers helped maintain the ceasefire in Kosovo, and U.N. administrators came in to help restore civil government.

Since Kosovo, U.N. peacekeepers have had some successes, primarily in smaller conflicts. In 1999, for instance, the organization helped shepherd the former Indonesian province of East Timor toward democracy and independence, after decades of bloody conflict between separatists and the Indonesian government.

Confronting Iraq

The terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, like the end of the Cold War a decade before, imbued the U.N. with a new, if brief, sense of unity and focus. With smoke still rising from

the World Trade Center just three miles south of U.N. headquarters, the Security Council authorized several anti-terrorism operations, including military action against Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda terrorist group were operating.

notice that continued defiance of the United Nations would prompt American military action: "The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. . . . America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's safety."

In fall 2002, the United States and Britain began lobbying other Security Council members for a resolution that would give Iraq a time limit to reveal and destroy its WMDs or face invasion. Permanent members France and Russia were strongly opposed, as was Germany, which held one of the rotating council seats. Along with other countries, they argued that any effort to disarm Iraq should work within the U.N. system and that no U.N. resolution demanding Iraqi cooperation should be used to justify a war.

Finally, in November, a compromise emerged. Security Council Resolution 1441, which passed 15-0, authorized the return of U.N. arms inspectors to Iraq, required Baghdad to account for all WMDs within 90 days and promised "serious consequences" for

non-cooperation. The U.N. quickly dispatched International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to look at Iraq's nuclear program and the Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission to search for chemical and biological weapons.

The passage of 1441 initially was hailed as a triumph for international cooperation and for the United Nations system. But the resolution, with its



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei (left), shown with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami in Tebran last year, has been criticized for not demanding more accountability from Iran and other nations suspected of trying to produce nuclear weapons. The U.N.-supported IAEA is charged with ensuring that civilian nuclear programs are not used to create nuclear weapons.

But within a year of the 9/11 attacks, the U.N.'s newfound unity began to crack. With Afghanistan under American control and al Qaeda on the run, the U.S. turned its attention to Iraq's Hussein, who continued to defy U.N. mandates to publicly account for his alleged WMDs.

In his first post 9/11 State of the Union address, on Jan. 29, 2002, President Bush put Iraq and the world on

AFP Photo/Atta Kenare

vague threat of “consequences,” had merely delayed the inevitable big clash over whether war would ever be justified.

By the end of January, head U.N. arms inspector Hans Blix had reported back to the Security Council that Iraq “appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance . . . of the disarmament that was demanded of it,” leaving the great powers once again deadlocked over what to do next.²³ France and its allies favored expanded arms inspections while the United States and Britain wanted authorization for the use of force unless Iraq immediately disarmed.

Negotiations dragged on for weeks with each side growing increasingly critical of the other. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder dismissed U.S. plans to invade Iraq as “an adventure,” an anti-American position that had helped him secure re-election the year before. For his part, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ruffled feathers when he labeled France and Germany as part of “old Europe,” compared to the ex-communist Central and Eastern European states that supported the U.S. position.

In February, the opposition, led by France, threatened to veto any American or British resolution authorizing military action. French President Jacques Chirac argued that he would never opt for war when there was still a chance that Iraq could be disarmed peacefully. Some observers say France was trying to create a new bloc of powerful countries to serve as a counterweight to the United States, which the French had labeled a “hyperpower.”

But the U.S. said it would invade Iraq with or without the U.N.’s blessing. The old cooperative spirit evident during the first Persian Gulf War and Afghanistan was gone.

The split in the Security Council endured right up to the war on March 17 and despite last-minute efforts to

reach a compromise. Miscalculations apparently played a part. The French held out hope that America and Britain would not really attack on their own, while the Americans continued to believe the French ultimately would not oppose ousting Hussein.

But the biggest loser in the struggle may have been the U.N. itself. “This was a terrible blow to the U.N. system,” the U.N. Foundation’s Mendelson-Forman says. “By excluding the U.N. from the process, by taking a unilateral as opposed to a multilateral approach to this problem, we ended up saying that the U.N. didn’t matter. We made a laughing stock of the U.N.” ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Peacekeeping Lessons

Although its charter requires the U.N. to help ensure the “collective security of nations,” it does not actually authorize peacekeeping missions. Secretary-General Hammarskjöld half-jokingly said peacekeeping — the term he coined — was authorized by “Chapter Six and a Half” of the charter because it fell between resolving disputes peacefully (Chapter 6) and using embargos and other more forceful means (Chapter 7).

In the past, critics have called the U.N.’s peacekeeping efforts ineffective and even negligent. But U.N.-watchers of varying political stripes say the international community sends insufficient numbers of peacekeepers to deal with intractable problems. “People try to throw in U.N. forces as a substitute either for a lack of will by the parties involved to settle their differences or lack of willingness by the

great powers to deal with the issue,” says Columbia University’s Luck. “So, of course, peacekeeping missions turn out badly. What do people expect?”

The so-called safe havens created in Bosnia were just the kind of situation where the U.N. was expected to perform miracles, Luck says.* “The fighting was still raging in Bosnia, and no one really wanted to put outside forces on the ground,” he says. “So they put inadequate peacekeepers on the ground and substituted words like ‘safe haven’ in lieu of real protection.”

Nancy Soderberg, vice president of the International Crisis Group, a conflict-resolution think tank in New York, agrees. “The Serbs wanted to keep fighting, so everything quickly got out of control,” she says. “The situation didn’t improve until the U.S. bombed, and a NATO force was put in place, which should have happened in the first place.”

Indeed, Bosnia taught the U.N. some valuable lessons about peacekeeping. Soderberg says. “They’ve learned they can’t fight the war or enforce the peace,” she says. “Those things have to be taken care of before they come in.”

Soderberg says Kosovo and — more recently Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast — are examples of the U.N.’s more practical approach to peacekeeping. “They’re not rushing into these places,” she says. Peacekeepers went into Liberia and the Congo only after military forces from the region, the United States or France had established peace. “The U.N. can come in when there’s truly a peace to keep.”

Peacekeeping is now among the U.N.’s most important and visible activities, along with humanitarian efforts, such as assisting refugees and providing food aid.²⁴ The mission to

* The havens were areas set aside to protect Muslim refugees, but Serb troops entered the areas with no resistance from U.N. guards and murdered thousands of Muslims.

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At Issue:

Should the U.S. transfer administrative power in Iraq to the U.N.?

STEPHEN ZUNES

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WRITTEN FOR *THE CQ RESEARCHER*, FEBRUARY 2004

With the original justifications for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in doubt and discontent growing over U.S. occupation policies, increasing numbers of Iraqis are challenging the U.S. role in their country — even those who opposed Saddam Hussein's brutal regime.

Although extremist elements would not be satisfied if administrative responsibilities were transferred from U.S. occupation forces to the United Nations, such a move would dramatically decrease the extremists' support and facilitate restoring basic services, maintaining stability and establishing peaceful and democratic self-governance.

U.S. forces could remain in Iraq under U.N. command. However, even if the Bush administration chose to withdraw, there would still be sufficient forces available from other U.N. member states for peacekeeping and administrative responsibilities. Several Western European and South Asian governments, which refused to contribute troops under what they see as an illegal U.S. occupation, would do so under the U.N. flag.

It is unlikely that any Iraqi regime that emerges from the U.S. occupation — particularly under the proposed system of caucuses chosen by U.S. appointees — would be accepted as legitimate. Both popular resistance and terrorism would therefore continue, requiring an ongoing presence of U.S. forces.

By contrast, an Iraqi government that would emerge under an international mandate through the United Nations would be far more credible, both inside and outside Iraq, and could thereby take responsibility for its own security needs a lot sooner.

The financial burdens of administrative and security functions in Iraq have thus far fallen upon the American taxpayer. Under U.N. leadership, the United States would be responsible for no more than 20 percent of the costs.

The challenges facing any interim administration in Iraq are daunting, and the United Nations, like other intergovernmental bodies, is an imperfect organization. The U.N. has had a lot more experience in nation-building, however, than the U.S. armed forces, whose primary function should be defending America.

East Timor was a U.N. trusteeship for two years after the withdrawal of Indonesian forces in 1999; the new East Timorese government is a stable democracy and a strong U.S. ally. The U.N. also successfully administered postwar Kosovo, even as NATO remained in charge of security. Turning administration of Iraq over to the U.N. makes sense for Iraq, for America and for the world.

THOMAS DONNELLY

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WRITTEN FOR *THE CQ RESEARCHER*, FEBRUARY 2004

the recent visit by U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to Iraq invites a question as to what role the U.N. can play in American-occupied Iraq, and whether the United States should shape its policies to attract greater international support.

Brahimi's trip was a whopping success, to judge by the headlines. He got in to see the leading Shi'a cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, something Ambassador Paul Bremer III hasn't accomplished. And Brahimi seemed to broker a deal that split the difference between the American plan for a quick transfer of Iraqi sovereignty through regional caucuses and Sistani's demand for direct elections.

Moreover, the U.N. saved Iraq from civil war and conferred a long-sought legitimacy on post-Saddam Iraq, according to the press.

But whether the U.N. can serve as a real powerbroker in Iraq remains very doubtful. First of all, the U.N. has little in the way of real power to bring to the table, and that's what Iraqis and the American-led coalition are jockeying over at the moment. Just because some negotiations may be held in the U.N.'s tent does not mean the U.N. is actually participating in the talks. And, to Iraqi factions trying to summon a minimum of political trust, there is little doubt that the United States is the most trustworthy and most attractive partner.

Two indisputable facts underscore this truth. First is the matter of political legitimacy. As the American Founders wrote repeatedly, the source of a government's legitimacy lies in its ability and commitment to secure the natural political rights of its citizens. This is as true in Iraq today as it was in the English colonies two centuries ago. But the U.N. was founded on state sovereignty and political stability — the principles that helped preserve Saddam Hussein in power for decades, a fact not forgotten by the Iraqi people. Iraqi factions know what the various warring factions in the Balkans knew: America and its real allies are most likely to be their honest broker.

Secondly, in a less-than-utopian world, legitimacy without power is meaningless — indeed, worse than meaningless. The U.N. already has been a target for Iraqi rejectionists, as U.N. forces in the Balkans were. This suggests something less than a respect for the legitimacy of the U.N.

While the Bush administration rightly welcomes the positive contributions of the U.N. to the immense task of reconstruction in Iraq, it cannot delude itself that the world body can be any substitute for the exercise of U.S. power.

Continued from p. 188

Congo is the largest of the 13 active operations, with 10,500 U.N. troops helping maintain a fragile ceasefire following a brutal civil war that left 3 million dead.

Some experts have suggested the U.N. should establish a permanent peacekeeping force. Currently, the U.N. must ask members to contribute troops or money whenever peacekeepers are needed — a time-consuming process that prevents rapid response.

“Better early-warning systems must be developed, and the international

and stop overreaching in its goals,” says Luck at the Center on International Organizations.

The operational quality of U.N. peacekeepers also needs improvement, Soderberg says. “Most of the troops come from developing countries, and they are often not well-equipped or trained,” she says. “The U.S. should help train and equip U.N. forces.”

Thomas Donnelly, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, agrees, arguing that troops from many of the peacekeeping nations can’t “do much more than man roadblocks.”

1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — signed by 187 nations — countries with nuclear facilities must follow certain safeguards and allow IAEA inspections.²⁷

Recently, the IAEA has played a constructive role in several anti-proliferation efforts. For instance, after the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, Iraq was found to have a much more advanced nuclear weapons program than anyone had suspected. Under the peace agreement following the war, the IAEA supervised the dismantling of the program while inspectors from the ad hoc U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) searched for chemical and biological weapons.

In the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq last March, IAEA inspectors returned to determine whether Hussein was continuing to develop nuclear weapons. They found little evidence that the program had been resuscitated.

But critics complain that several countries have “gone nuclear,” unbeknown to the IAEA, including India, Israel and Pakistan. In fact, North Korea claims to have built one or more bombs while a small IAEA team was in the country monitoring a plutonium reactor. More recently, Libya admitted to the existence of four nuclear sites that were part of its secret WMD program.²⁸

The agency has also drawn fire because Iran allegedly has been developing nuclear weapons, despite the past presence of IAEA inspectors. Iran finally agreed to new IAEA oversight only after Britain, France and Germany brought pressure on Iranian officials.

Critics of the agency say it has been too trusting of some states. “They told countries that if they would forgo nuclear weapons, they could get access to nuclear technology for civilian use,” the Lexington Institute’s Goure says. “Well guess what? Iran and North Korea ended

“The international community must become willing to react in the early stages of a conflict.”

**— Sir Brian Urquhart,
Former U.N. Undersecretary for Peacekeeping**

community must become willing to react in the early stages of a conflict,” Sir Brian Urquhart, former U.N. undersecretary for peacekeeping operation and perhaps the most well-regarded proponent of a permanent peacekeeping force, said. “Some sort of highly trained standing force seems needed.”²⁵

However, many U.N.-watchers doubt that a permanent force would help. “They could never afford to have the kind of force that could operate without the assistance of the great powers,” Luck says. “And if the great powers are on board, you don’t need some sort of U.N. group, because they can raise a sufficient force to deal with the problem.”

To make peacekeeping more effective, the Security Council should pass “sober and realistic resolutions

Nuclear Watchdog

When the United Nations was created in 1945, only the United States had nuclear weapons. Today, eight countries are nuclear powers and several others — North Korea and Iran among them — either possess nuclear weapons or are close to developing them.²⁶

Moreover, there is widespread fear that terrorist groups like al Qaeda will attack civilian targets using a nuclear device or conventional explosives packed with nuclear material — so-called “dirty bombs.”

The U.N.-affiliated IAEA promotes the peaceful use of nuclear power. It inspects nuclear-power and research facilities to ensure that they are not being used to produce weapons. Under the

up using the technology to develop a nuclear weapons program.” *

Goure says the agency tries to be evenhanded, even with states that are less responsible about the use of their civilian nuclear programs. “The IAEA sees this as an equality issue, but the fact of the matter is that some of these countries, like Iran, just shouldn’t be getting this technology, period.”

Others say the agency’s current director general, Egyptian scientist Mohamed ElBaradei, sympathizes more with nations seeking nuclear weapons than with those trying to halt their spread. ElBaradei “has routinely acted in a way better calculated to thwart U.S. counterproliferation efforts than to prevent the spread of nuclear weaponry,” according to Frank Gaffney, president of the Center for Security Policy, a defense think tank.²⁹

“ElBaradei has gone to great lengths to prevent the Bush administration from bringing Iran’s illegal nuclear-weapons program before the U.N. Security Council,” Gaffney writes, a step mandated by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. ElBaradei also has slanted IAEA reports on Iran “to make sure the conclusions do not support a Security Council referral, often by inserting unjustified findings that obscure or downplay the actual evidence,” Gaffney charges.³⁰

IAEA supporters acknowledge past mistakes by the agency but say it has made the best of what has often been a bad situation. The “bleeding between civilian and military nuclear programs” is inevitable because of the “Siamese-twin relationship” that exists between the two, points out Rose Gottemoeller, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former head of Department of Energy non-proliferation policy. “This leaves the IAEA with a very tough job.” But the agency has taken

* Iran continues to deny accusations from many in the international community that it has a nuclear weapons program.

the lead on important issues and “generally done good work,” she adds. “I think you can call them a success.”

In addition, Goure says, “ElBaradei is getting much tougher,” in part because the United States and the Europeans are pressing him not to be too soft.

But Gottemoeller says his tougher attitude is driven more by recent developments than outside pressure. “I talked to him after he returned from Iran, and he’s deadly serious about getting a handle on this,” she says. “The problem cases, like Iran and North Korea, have really made him want to deal with these issues.” ■

OUTLOOK

Regaining Relevance?

In a speech before the U.N. on Sept. 12, 2002, President Bush asked: “Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”³¹

Although Bush was referring to the U.N.’s lack of action in Iraq, the question resonated beyond the Middle East. Some U.N.-watchers contend the organization has proven incapable of meeting the president’s challenge.

The Lexington Institute’s Goure says the major powers already acknowledge in their actions, if not always their words, the U.N.’s lack of im-

portance in global security issues. “The U.S. has shown that it’s willing to act alone if it needs to,” he says, “and you have other players like the Europeans forming an E.U. [European Union] rapid-reaction force. Recently, even the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] nations created a security structure to deal with these kinds of issues. All of this points away from the U.N. and toward alternatives.”

Indeed, Goure argues, “Since the early 1950s, [the U.N.] hasn’t lived up to its mandate ‘To prevent wars and chase down aggressors.’ Recent events just showed how much this is the case.”

Other skeptics contend that the U.N. could still carve out an important role if it took a tougher line on the world’s biggest security threat: the development of WMDs by rogue states. “A lot hinges on how the U.N. handles the biggest security concerns we’re facing right now: namely Iran and North Korea,” says the Heritage Foundation’s Gardiner. “And I’m not optimistic.”

“If the U.N. were to disarm these countries, then they would be a serious player,” he continues. “But if there is more inaction and appeasement, then the organization will be written off. And, given the bipolar power structure at the Security Council — with the U.S. and Britain on one side and France and Russia on the other — I really don’t see any strong response from the U.N. on this issue any time soon.”

But the University of San Francisco’s Zunes says the United Nations plays too important a role in the world to

About the Author

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sink into irrelevance. “Eventually, we’ll realize how much we need the United Nations to help keep the peace and make the world a better place,” he says. “Unfortunately, given the attitude of the current administration, we’ll probably hobble the U.N. more than help it in the short run, but I’m optimistic over the longer term.”

Columbia University’s Luck also sees signs of the U.N.’s future relevance. “Even when you look at Iraq, which was supposed to be the U.N.’s darkest hour, you see evidence that it is terribly relevant,” he says. “Why has the United States gone back to the United Nations over and over again with regard to Iraq? Because the U.N. is a vital part of the furniture of international relations, and the U.S. knows that.”

Indeed, Luck says, most states see the continued existence of the U.N. as very much in their interest. “On one hand, smaller countries want to have a voice — especially on the big issues of war and peace — and where else can they go except the U.N.?” he asks. “On the other hand, big powers, even the U.S., need partners and help, and the U.N. is still the best place for that.”

Others share the view that the U.N. will always be seen as necessary for global stability. “No matter how often we criticize the U.N., it’s necessary to have a forum like it,” says Boorstin of the Center for American Progress. “If the U.N. didn’t exist, we’d have to build it.” ■

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036; (202) 862-5800; www.aei.org. A major Washington think tank.

Center for American Progress, 805 15th St., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 682-1611; www.americanprogress.org. A nonpartisan research and educational institute.

International Crisis Group, 1629 K St., N.W., Suite 450, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 785-1601; www.crisisweb.org. A nonprofit, non-governmental organization devoted to resolving conflicts around the globe.

United Nations Association, 801 2nd Ave., 2nd Fl., New York, N.Y. 10017; (212) 907-1300; www.unausa.org. A nonprofit group that supports the U.N.

United Nations Foundation, 1225 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 887-9040; www.unfoundation.org. Supports U.N. activities through grants and public-private partnerships.

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Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

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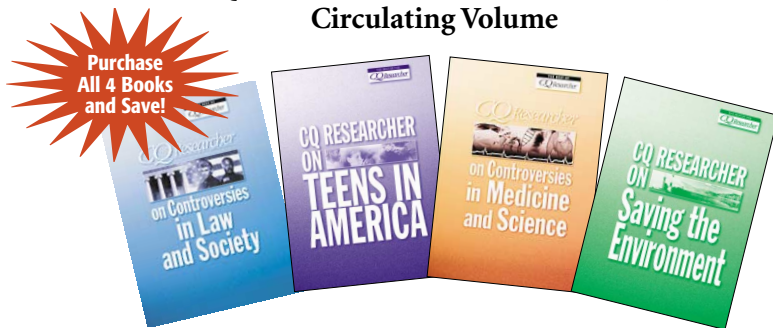
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