

The Role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War Environment

In this chapter you will learn about:

- an overview of UN intervention during the Cold War
- the impact of the ending of the Cold War from 1991
- the position of the UN by 2004.



Fig. 1 *The UN Security Council*

The United Nations has been one of the most controversial post-war international agencies. Some view it as an essential tool for peacekeeping and diplomacy, useful for putting pressure on aggressive states and for managing international crises. Others, however, see it as a weak organisation that puts the self-interest of its member states above humanitarian concerns, and a body that has been unable to prevent some of the world's worst violations of human rights.

■ The UN up to 1988

The United Nations was established in October 1945, and was originally comprised of 51 member states. Emerging from the horrors of World War II, the global community sought a new international organisation that could work to prevent war and genocide occurring again. The UN Charter document laid out the organisation's key objectives:

- 1 To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.
- 2 To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.
- 3 To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.
- 4 To be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

Although World War II was over, the world was still faced with numerous local conflicts. Consequently the UN, which could command international military forces, found itself called upon for numerous peacekeeping operations over the next three decades.

Table 1 *UN peacekeeping operations, 1948–78*

Year	UN Operation
1948–present	United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO)
1949–present	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)
1956–67	United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)
1958	United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL)
1960–4	United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC)
1962–3	United Nations Security Force in West New Guinea (UNSF)
1963–4	United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM)
1964–present	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)
1965–6	United Nations India–Pakistan Observation Mission (UNIPOM)
1973–9	Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II)
1974–present	United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF)
1978–present	United Nations Force in Lebanon (UNIFL)

Activity

Research activity

Separate into several groups. In your group, research one example of UN intervention before 1989 and explore how successful that intervention was, and why.

Key terms

Veto: the permanent member states of the Security Council had the power to vote against any action or intervention by the UN. This power was built into the Charter of the UN to ensure that the powerful states would be willing to participate in collective action. A simple majority system would have deterred many states from joining, particularly the communist eastern bloc powers who were convinced that the UN was a tool of western policy.

The Cold War greatly constrained the effectiveness of the UN as a peacekeeping organisation. Security Council members had the power to **veto** UN intervention and this power was used frequently because of superpower Cold War interests. As Table 1 illustrates, there were only twelve UN interventions between 1948 and 1978. The use of the veto was a primary factor in this relative inaction. Table 3 illustrates the profound shift in UN interventionism once the Cold War had ended. The dramatic shift in the use of the veto is also strongly indicative of the new attitudes adopted towards international peacekeeping as Table 2 illustrates:

Table 2 *Security Council Vetoes, 1946–2004*

Period	China	France	Britain	USA	USSR/ Russia	Total
1946–1955	1	2	0	0	80	83
1956–1965	0	2	3	0	26	31
1966–1975	2	2	10	12	7	33
1976–1985	0	9	11	34	6	60
1986–1995	0	3	8	24	2	37
1996–1999	2	0	0	2	0	4
2000–2004	0	0	0	8	1	9
Total	5	18	32	80	122	257

The Cold War largely paralysed UN interventionism. Peacekeeping operations could only be undertaken with the unanimous agreement of the Security Council. It became an accepted tradition that such

operations also depended on the consent of the conflicting parties. The UN's role was to be based on strict impartiality. Its peacekeeping forces could not take sides in a conflict.

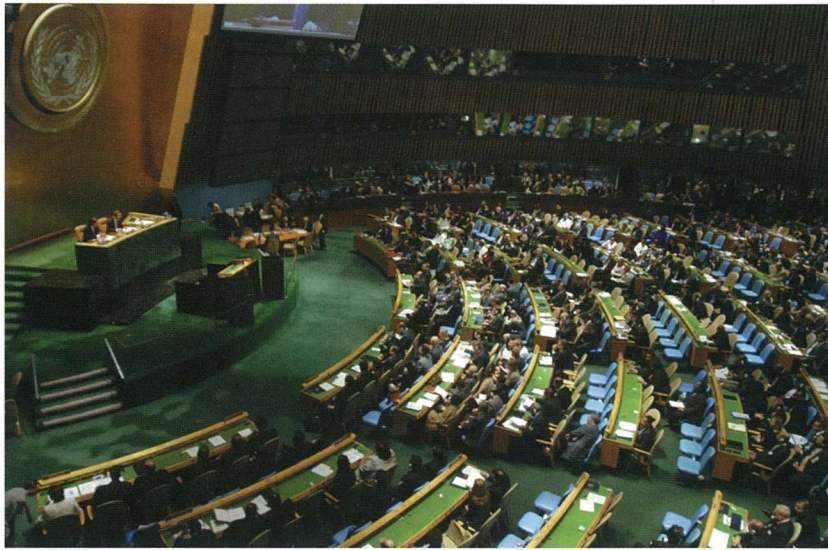


Fig. 2 The UN General Assembly

Table 3 Selected UN Peace and Security Operations, 1988–2004

Year	Operation
1988–90	United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP)
1988–91	United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG)
1991–5	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL)
1991–5	United Nations Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM)
1991–present	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)
1991–present	United Nations Iraq–Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM)
1992–3	United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM)
1993–6	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)
1993–7	United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL)
1993–present	United Nations Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH)
1996–7	United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH)
1999–2002	United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNTAET)
1999–present	United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)
1999–present	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)
2000–present	United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE)
2002–present	United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET)
2002–present	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

The UN and the end of the Cold War

In 1988 Mikhail Gorbachev announced a new Soviet relationship with the UN. He was committed to cooperation in the management of international conflicts. UN peacekeeping offered the Soviet Union a way out of the ‘bleeding wound’ of Afghanistan. This triggered a shift in US policy as Ronald Reagan publicly praised the UN’s role as an international peacekeeper. He announced through the General Assembly that “the United Nations has the opportunity to live and breathe and work as never before.” Both the Soviet Union and the USA agreed to pay their financial debts to the UN in order to enable it to function effectively. In effect superpower cooperation was expanding and the UN appeared to be one of the first beneficiaries of this post-Cold War cooperation. Britain and France also recognised that they could maintain their own international status and influence through the UN’s revival as an international peacekeeper. Similarly the USA accepted that it was more productive to use the UN as the basis of international cooperation rather than to use force to achieve its objectives.

Cross-reference

For in-depth coverage of Gorbachev and his reforms, see Chapters 7 and 9.

What became increasingly clear in the post-Cold War era was that the challenges facing the UN were significantly different from those it had faced since its inception in 1945. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have themselves given birth to almost twenty new states. Somalia and Haiti effectively ceased to have any form of coordinated and organised government by 1993. The new world order that emerged was further complicated by international terrorism led by al-Qaeda.

The true rebirth of the post-Cold War UN began with the 1991 Gulf War.

The UN in action during the 1990s

UN involvement in the 1991 Gulf War

When Iraq invaded its oil-rich neighbour, Kuwait, in August 1991 the UN Security Council passed twelve resolutions aimed at forcing Iraq to withdraw. Resolution 678 enabled member states to use ‘all necessary means’ to remove Iraq from Kuwait. Iraq’s failure to withdraw by 15 January 1991 led to a twenty-eight power UN coalition force being formed. This removed Iraqi forces from Kuwait. In doing so the coalition forces not only attacked Iraqi troops in Kuwait, it also bombed Iraq itself.

The UN action raised a number of concerns. The most significant was that the coalition was dominated by US forces. Many critics argued that the USA created an anti-Iraq coalition in order to serve US interests. The UN was presented as a tool used to promote US influence. The USA used its political and economic power in the Security Council to ensure its own Persian Gulf agenda was fulfilled. The USA promised financial packages to a number of developing countries. It offered political concessions to both the USSR and to China. Significantly, it was the USA that led the coalition forces in Kuwait and thereby determined what the strategic aims and methods of that force would be in terms of Iraq. The UN Security Council was left to assume the role of merely that of a bystander. This UN enforcement action in the Persian Gulf was the first in the new post-Cold War era and it revealed the limited powers of the Security Council in the face of US determination to implement its own regional agenda. The UN’s role in the Persian Gulf in 1991 was more than merely a peacekeeping one. Under the direction of a US-driven intervention, the UN moved towards enforcement and away from peacekeeping.

Activity

Thinking point

Examine each of the following interventions listed in this section of the book. Define exactly why the United Nations became involved on each occasion, and the level of success it achieved. Do you see any particular patterns, or problems, emerging about the way the UN was used?

Cross-reference

For more about the UN involvement in the 1991 Gulf War, see Chapter 10.

Exploring the detail

UN Resolutions

UN Resolutions are typically issued by the General Assembly or the Security Council. They are statements of action or intent to which some or all of the member states are committed.

In addition to this, another shift in the UN's role began to emerge in the post-Cold War context of international relations and international peacekeeping. From the end of the Cold War it became increasingly clear that the UN faced greater challenges than could be met through the traditional peacekeeping role of the organisation. This became clear through a series of UN interventions during the 1990s.

Cambodia, 1992–3

The first significant involvement came in Cambodia. In February 1992 the Security Council established the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Its role was to produce a 'just and durable settlement to the Cambodian conflict' based on free elections. It was to achieve this within 18 months. Part of this process necessitated simultaneously disarming the Khmer Rouge guerrillas and the government forces. The UN entered the crisis in Cambodia in a traditional peacekeeping role. By May 1993 the UN had succeeded in managing national elections. Once the elections had been held the UN began to withdraw its personnel. The elections had been an apparent triumph for the UN, if for no other reason than the beginnings of democracy had been established in Cambodia. In the 10 years after the UN's withdrawal Cambodia developed only slowly as a mature liberal democracy. Despite this gradual change the UN did succeed in moving the state away from its repressive political system. Greater openness came into Cambodia and debate and criticism came to be tolerated. As Berdal and Leifer commented, "Cambodia is much more usefully seen as an example of the possibilities as well as the limitations of the UN's role in transplanting democracy and political stability to countries that are emerging, in what is necessarily a traumatised, weakened and divided condition from protracted periods of instability, violence and war."

Despite the apparent successes enjoyed by the UN in its intervention in Cambodia there were some significant shortcomings. Cambodia remained a fundamentally unstable state after UNTAC had left. The Cambodian problem illustrates the limitations faced by the UN in post-Cold War peacekeeping. The end of the Cold War meant that there was an end to the constraints imposed by the Cold War on UN peacekeeping. Theoretically, the UN could carry out its role without superpower interference. The problem was that because the superpowers no longer had specific interests, they no longer influenced their former client states. In effect, the role of the superpowers had been as positive as it had been negative during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War had also brought to an end the very positive impact of superpower involvement in the work of the UN. In terms of Cambodia, the UN was effective in establishing the administrative framework for democracy and stability but the absence of superpower influence undermined the chances of that process being translated into a long-term and lasting one.

Somalia, 1992–5

With the end of the Cold War, superpower interest in Somalia faded. Prior to this there had been considerable interest in Somalia, primarily from the USA. Somalia's strategic position on the Horn of Africa became significant when the USSR backed the revolutionary regime established in neighbouring Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s. The USA in turn supported the Somali regime of Siyad Barre. By 1991 this regime had collapsed and all form of government in Somalia ceased to exist; internal chaos had become endemic. It had become a country ruled by warlords. About a third of its population faced death from starvation.

Exploring the detail

The Khmer Rouge

Established in the 1960s, the Khmer Rouge was the communist movement in Cambodia. Its leader, Pol Pot, controlled the country between 1974 and 1978. Pol Pot believed in returning society to its most basic level; part of this plan was to murder intellectuals and academics. The organisation was overthrown but continued to conduct a guerrilla war until 1991 when it won a voice in the governing body of Cambodia. From 1985 its leader was Khieu Samphan.

Key terms

Developing states: a general term for some states in Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. The term denotes those states that are economically underdeveloped and often have problems managing their national security. The Cold War context in which many of these states had to conduct their foreign policies often actually worsened their problems. However, the end of the Cold War has tended to reduce the importance of developing states as far as the superpowers are concerned.

Exploring the detail

'Black Hawk Down'

On 3 October 1993 an attempt was made by US forces to capture key leaders linked to the Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. In the process of this action two army helicopters were brought down in Mogadishu, the heartland of Aidid's territory. This led to a desperate rescue mission undertaken by US forces. What should have been a simple 45 minute rescue lasted 15 hours and left 18 Americans dead and about 1000 Somali casualties. The incident is recorded in US military annals as one displaying supreme acts of bravery.

Cross-reference

For a detailed account of the break-up of Yugoslavia, see Chapter 10.

In August 1992 the Security Council established United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). The aim of UNOSOM was to provide humanitarian aid. The violence could not be contained by the small UN force in Somalia and by December 1992 the USA offered 27,000 troops in order to provide security for UN aid to Somalia. The Security Council set up a Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to be under American operational control. The Americans labelled the action Operation Restore Hope. This force succeeded in opening a door for humanitarian aid but the basic problem remained. Somalia still did not have any form of central government or authority. Even the presence of America failed to curb the chaos. There were considerable anti-American feelings among many **developing states** and Somalia was different in this respect.

In May 1993 the Security Council authorised UNOSOM II. This was to be under UN rather than US control. A period of bloody violence followed as UN forces clashed with one of the principal warlords, Mohammed Aidid. Part of the conflict was known as the Battle of Mogadishu or 'Black Hawk Down'. The UN operation in Somalia faced two basic problems. The objectives of the operation shifted from delivering humanitarian relief to nation- and state-building. A more fundamental problem lay in the reluctance of the USA to continue its role in the action. By May 1994 President Clinton's administration decided to reverse America's attitude towards assertive multilateralism. America's participation in multilateral military action in Somalia was crucial, as was its withdrawal from it.

The last UN forces vacated Somalia in March 1995. The operation had turned into one of enforcement rather than peacekeeping. Somalia had not been a consenting state to UN intervention. The UN faced continuous military opposition from the many warring factions. This made a peacekeeping role almost impossible. The worst of the humanitarian crisis had been resolved but by 2003 Somalia still remained without a viable central government.

Activity

Thinking point

What does the case of Somalia tell us about the limits of UN peacekeeping? In a small group, imagine you are leaders of a UN peacekeeping force heading to a war-torn and failed state. Try to think of your priorities for the mission (e.g. establish utilities, protect vulnerable minorities). What does this exercise tell you about the difficulties of peacekeeping?

The former Yugoslavia, 1992–5

The UN experienced failure in its intervention in the former Yugoslavia. The international community faced a fundamental contradiction. It was committed both to the sanctity of state frontiers and the right of self-determination and the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities.

The traditional peacekeeping entry point for the UN was the existence of a responsive host state. The most effective peacekeeping interventions during the Cold War had been those in which the conflicting sides were organised and wanted a solution. This was not the case in the former Yugoslavia. A basic question facing the international community was whether intervention should aim to lessen humanitarian suffering or whether it should be based on the principle of the sanctity of frontiers. In the case of Yugoslavia the frontier issue was an enforcement issue. For the UN there was also the question of whether the problems in

Yugoslavia could be dealt with through the EU and NATO as European agencies. Despite these issues, in February 1992 the UN established the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). Its immediate mandate was to 'create the conditions of peace and security required for the overall settlement of the ... crisis.' Its role was based on a traditional interpositionary one. By August the mandate was extended to deliver humanitarian aid and the force was empowered to use 'all measures necessary' to achieve this aim.

The UNPROFOR mandate was widened to include the creation of safe areas for refugees in Bosnia and using NATO to enforce sanctions. The UN's role expanded from a fairly traditional peacekeeping presence to a much more complex and demanding one. The cooperation with NATO as a regional organisation was the first of its kind for the UN. There were some spectacular failures for the UN which underlined the changed and more complex role it faced in post-Cold War Yugoslavia. In July 1995, 7,500 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were massacred in Srebrenica by Bosnian Serbs. There was little evidence of much political will on the part of UN members to set up enforcement action against this group and their supporters. The Dayton Peace Accords were established in November 1995 through the good offices of the USA. This effectively ended the UN's peacekeeping role in Bosnia and Croatia. These Accords introduced the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR). Among this force of 60,000 troops were 20,000 Americans.

It was clear that the UN's role was made all the more difficult by the fact that it did not enjoy the consent of those in conflict. The enforcement role of the UN became more prominent and more urgent in the former Yugoslavia than in any other previous involvement. Once again the post-Cold War international environment was generating far more complex problems than the UN had previously encountered.

Rwanda, 1993–6

Between April and June 1994, some 800,000 citizens of the African state of Rwanda were murdered. The victims were mainly members of the minority Tutsi tribe, turned on by the majority Hutus after the death of the Hutu Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, whose plane was shot down over Kigali airport on 6 April 1994. A further 2 million people were displaced and 2 million others fled as refugees into neighbouring states. A UN force (UNAMIR) had been in Rwanda for eight months by May 1994. Its role had been to facilitate the Arusha Peace Accords between the Rwanda Hutus and the Tutsis. It was widely believed that this UN Mission was poorly prepared for the challenges that awaited it.

The UN's response to the Rwanda crisis was indecisive and inadequate. There was no swift response from a substantial force deployed by a strong military power. There was no significant concerted international pressure, particularly from the USA. The Security Council actually reduced UN military forces after attacks against a small number of Belgian peacekeepers. Between June and August 1994 there was the French-led Operation Turquoise. This was designed to stabilise the south western part of the country. The French actually used their presence to protect some of their Hutu allies in the region. During July and August the USA set up Operation Support Hope. This provided some humanitarian relief.

Exploring the detail

The Srebrenica Massacre

This was an ethnic cleansing action carried out by the Army Republika Srpska led by Ratko Mladic. The aim was to eliminate Bosnian Muslims (Bosniacs). Those in Srebrenica were seen as being representative of Muslims in general. The action was a purely ethnic one in that the victims were selected entirely because of their religious and cultural identity. The victims had no military role.

Activity

Talking point

Write two newspaper articles on the Srebrenica Massacre, one from the Serbian side and one from the Bosnian Muslim side. How would both sides justify their viewpoints?



Fig. 3 The UN International Court of Justice

The UN failed to establish a secure environment in Rwanda. There was a fear among many in the international community that involvement in Rwanda could lead to a hopeless long-term commitment. Considerable humanitarian aid reached Rwanda but only after the genocide had been completed. The UN's role in response to the crisis in Rwanda has been judged by many as one of its greatest failures. This was very much the UN's own self-assessment by 1997. The incoming Secretary General, Kofi Annan admitted during a visit to Kigali, "We must and we do acknowledge that the world failed Rwanda at that time of evil. The international community and the United Nations could not muster the political will to confront it." He went on to say, "There was a United Nations force in the country at the time, but it was neither mandated nor equipped for the kind of forceful action which would have been needed to prevent or halt the genocide. On behalf of the United Nations, I acknowledge this failure and express my deep remorse." Annan's remorse may also have been linked to his own failings. He had been in charge of the UN's peacekeeping department in New York at the time of the crisis and he had ignored the calls in April 1994 from the Force Commander, Romeo Dallaire, for a more proactive role for his force in order to stem the growing genocide.

Key profile

Kofi Annan, 1938–present

Annan was born in Ghana and joined the UN in 1962 as a worker for the World Health Organisation. He held a number of senior positions and became Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. In 1995 he was appointed as the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Yugoslavia.

Kosovo, 1999

The 1990s made it increasingly clear that the UN's traditional approaches were becoming irrelevant. The problems in Kosovo illustrate this problem. The UN did not intervene in Kosovo until a cease-fire had been established. Many commentators argue that the UN Security Council was largely ignored by the major Western powers that used NATO as the means of fulfilling their own interventionist aims. It follows from this that the authority and credibility of the Security Council, and the UN as a whole, was undermined.

Serbia had begun a programme of ethnic cleansing directed against Kosovar Albanians in 1999. This ethnic cleansing was conducted with ruthlessness by the Serbian and Yugoslav military. International attempts at diplomacy which were designed to change Serb policy towards ethnic Albanians prior to the 'cleansing' action had failed. The Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic had consistently shown an absolute disregard for international opinion over Kosovo. By late January 1999 the USA was increasingly moving away from diplomacy and towards a military solution. Kofi Annan had reached a similar position. In a speech given before NATO leaders he concluded:

The bloody wars of the last decade have left us with no illusions about the difficulty of halting internal conflicts by reason or by force particularly against the wishes of the government of a sovereign state. But nor have they left us with any illusions about the need to use force, when all other means have failed. We may be reaching that limit, once again, in the former Yugoslavia.

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Key profile

Slobodan Milosevic, 1941–2006

Milosevic studied law and developed a career in business. In 1978 he became president of a Belgrade bank. Always committed to politics, he became Chief of the Communist Party Organisation in Belgrade in 1984 and went on to become President of Serbia in 1987, a post he held until 1997 when he became President of Yugoslavia. During the collapse of the unified Yugoslavia he was responsible for promoting ethnic crimes and he went on trial in 2001 at the International War Crimes Tribunal held in The Hague. He died of a heart attack in 2006.

Diplomacy was not immediately abandoned. A further attempt was made in February 1999 at Rambouillet. The international community, represented by Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Italy and Russia attempted to broker a settlement between Yugoslavia and an Albanian Kosovar delegation. Milosevic's unwillingness to reach a compromise caused the talks to collapse. It made any further diplomatic efforts appear pointless. This became obvious in March when NATO forces began what was to be a 77-day bombardment of Serbian targets. This has been interpreted as a breach of international law as it did not have the explicit approval of the UN Security Council. NATO's Secretary-General, Javier Solana, took the view that it was justified in human terms and therefore a legitimate action. The international response was less understanding. Both China and Russia viewed NATO's actions as illegal. Generally the UN's response was ambivalent. The Secretary-General acknowledged that NATO had not received Security Council approval but he emphasised that the Serbs should not be simply allowed to get away with the humanitarian crisis which was unfolding in Kosovo.

In response to the NATO bombings the Serbs stepped up their programme of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. About 1.8 million ethnic Albanians were displaced in this action. Due to the intensification of NATO bombing Milosevic finally agreed on 3 June to end the violence in Kosovo and withdraw all Serbian forces. It was on 10 June that the Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 as the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This was to undertake a largely administrative role in conjunction with NATO. Until this point the UN had taken a very marginal role in Kosovo. The role the UN assumed from June was new. 49,000 NATO troops were to maintain security but it was UNMIK that was to have authority over the people and territory of Kosovo and all aspects of its civil administration. UNMIK was charged with establishing self-government in the region.

Key profile

Javier Solana, 1942–present

Solana is an eminent physicist. He entered Spanish politics in 1977 and became a Cabinet Minister in 1982. By 1992 he had reached the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. In December 1995 he left Spanish politics and was appointed Secretary-General of NATO where he remained until his appointment in October 1999 as Secretary-General for the Council of the European Union. In this post his primary aim has been to promote unity among the member states on foreign and security policy ideas.

Activity

Thinking point

In what ways did the end of the Cold War change the role of the UN?

Key terms

Autonomous: having the power of self-government, sometimes within another organisation. Essentially it suggests a degree of independence.

A number of crucial problems were associated with the Resolution. It placed a vast task on the UN administration. Upwards of 800,000 refugees had to be repatriated. The Serbian action had devastated housing and public buildings like schools and hospitals. In effect, the UNMIK was responsible for returning a devastated Kosovo to some degree of normality. A further problem lay in the fact that security appeared to be the responsibility of NATO but there was no clear division of responsibility between NATO and the UN. UN policies such as privatisation were poorly organised and implemented. Significantly, the ethnic Albanians wanted independence but the UN mandate required respect for Yugoslavia's sovereignty and for the protection of Serbs living in Kosovo. The UN was simply out of its depth in Kosovo and its tasks were too great to ensure success.

East Timor, 1999–2002

In 1975 Indonesia had invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. After a long period of struggle for East Timor, the Indonesians agreed to hold a plebiscite on the future of the territory. It was agreed that this 'popular consultation' was to take place in August 1999 and that the UN Secretary-General would be responsible for organising it. The issue was whether the people of East Timor would accept or reject a special **autonomous** status within the Republic of Indonesia. In June 1999 the UN established UNAMET, the UN Mission in East Timor with the mandate to conduct the consultation. The vote was held on 30 August and it resulted in 78.5 per cent of the people opting for independence.

The result was followed by extensive violence in which nearly half a million East Timorese were forced from their homes. In September, Indonesia accepted a UN force that was to be authorised to 'take all necessary measures' to achieve three specific tasks: 'to restore peace and security in East Timor; to protect and support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks; and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations.' With the violence subdued the UN was able to establish a Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) in October 1999. Its primary role was to establish and maintain law and order and to prepare the state for self-government and sustainable development. The process developed numerous problems as the UN's special representative, Vieira de Mello acknowledged in 2000:

UNTAET consulted on major policy issues, but in the end it retained all the responsibility for the design and execution of policy. What is more, the National Consultative Council came under increasing scrutiny for not being representative enough of East Timor Society and not transparent enough in its deliberations. Faced as we were with our own difficulties in the establishment of this mission, we did not, we could not involve the Timorese at large as much as they were entitled to.

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Essentially, the UN was offering only limited and somewhat confused consultation to the Timorese people about their future. The East Timorese Cabinet complained that they were “caricatures of ministers in a government of a banana republic” and that they had “no power, no duties, no resources to function adequately.” Despite these problems UNTAET succeeded in organising elections and paved the way for full independence. On 20 May 2002 East Timor was declared independent and UNTAET was replaced by the UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET). This remained with a scaled-down peacekeeping force until 2004.

The elections were a success and they were carried out peacefully. UNTAET had appeared to have fulfilled its stated role. The UN’s role was that of exercising almost sovereign powers in East Timor, albeit on a temporary basis. Not only did UNTAET administer East Timor; it also created laws and negotiated treaties. The UN’s involvement in East Timor represented a steep learning curve and one that may be repeated in other future UN operations which involve a transition to independence.

A closer look

Interpretations of the UN’s role

The UN was founded upon the principle of collective security. This is the idea that states work together to maintain international peace because it is in all their interests to do so. The reality became different. The UN operated in a Cold War environment. This meant that it tended to be effective as a peacekeeper when the superpowers cooperated with its work. That cooperation was dependent on whether it was in the interests of individual powers to do so or not. Throughout the Cold War the UN’s effectiveness as a peacekeeper was constrained by the ever-present impact of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War should have brought these constraints to an end. However, historians still debate the effectiveness of the UN in the post-Cold War world.

There is general agreement that international society consists of sovereign and independent states and that these states, although primarily concerned with defending their own national interests, are willing to support the role of the UN as an agent of international peacekeeping. The issue that divides historians is based on the importance of national sovereignty. On the one hand there are those who argue that the UN cannot be effective, even in the post-Cold War world, because national self-interest still drives the actions of most states. Such states will not accept interference by the UN in their own domestic affairs or the domestic affairs of any state. This school of interpretation explains the failings of the UN in Rwanda, for example. The logical outcome of this view is that the UN will

never be effective as a peacekeeper because its power to intervene, for example in civil wars, will always be restricted by the dominance of state sovereignty.

The alternative view is that as globalisation progresses and international society becomes more integrated, it is almost inevitable that the sovereign status of states will decline and the UN will assume a more effective role as a global peacekeeping agency. The evidence of the 1990s suggests that there is an ever-increasing need for wider UN intervention and limitations on the non-interventionist thinking linked to sovereignty. However, the ruse of international terrorism has reinforced the views of those historians who argue the realist, national self-interest position. 9/11 revived the quest for US global power and undermined its commitment to international cooperation that extended beyond its own self-interest.



Fig. 4 UN peacekeeping on the border between North and South Korea

Sierra Leone, 1999–present

A civil war erupted in Sierra Leone in March 1991. By 1998 the war had intensified and showed no signs of coming to a peaceful conclusion. In July of that year the Security Council finally established the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). Its role was to monitor the military and economic situation in the country. As rebel forces approached the capital, Freetown, in January 1999 the UN Observer Mission began to evacuate.

In October 1999 the UN implemented a more sizeable and effective peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone, known as the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The UNAMSIL deployment

became a huge operation – up to 17,500 UN soldiers – and included many Nigerian and British troops. The deployment saw UN forces being much more militarily forceful against warring parties. For example, in 2000, after a local group of insurgents kidnapped six British and one local soldier, British soldiers launched a major rescue operation, freeing the hostages and killing 17 insurgents. The mission in Sierra Leone was declared complete and successful in 2005.

The impact of the 11 September 2001 attacks: Iraq

Secretary-General Kofi Annan commented in response to the events of 11 September 2001, “Terrorism is a global menace. It calls for a united, global response. To defeat it all nations must take counsel together and act in unison. That is why we have the United Nations.” The Security Council recognised ‘the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence’ in response to terrorism when it introduced Resolution 1368. The USA invoked this self-defence approach against terrorism. It declared a military campaign in Afghanistan and focused on Iraq’s so-called weapons of mass destruction. The USA sought legitimacy for its actions through the UN.

One thing became increasingly clear. By late 2002, George W. Bush’s administration was anxious to get the Security Council to accept that only a military rather than a diplomatic solution was appropriate to address the issue of Iraq’s links with international terrorism and the country’s failure to comply with UN disarmament resolutions. The USA faced a growing lack of support within the UN memberships. Only Britain and Spain were

Cross-reference

For more about the effects of the 9/11 attacks, see Chapter 10.

willing to back the US demands for military action against Iraq. Ironically, the Security Council had endorsed US military attacks against the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Over Iraq both France and Russia were not convinced that the USA had shown a sufficient link between Iraq and terrorist attacks against the USA. The end of the Cold War had not brought a guaranteed end to fundamental disagreements in the Security Council.

The Bush administration merely argued that Saddam Hussein's regime might cooperate with anti-American terrorists. The opponents of the UN were not willing to accept what they referred to as the Bush Doctrine. This promoted the notion that the USA must carry out pre-emptive or anticipatory self-defence. This meant that the basis of US international relations in this new age of aggressive anti-American terrorism was to be founded upon the idea that Washington would decide what government, through its perceived links with terrorism, would be targeted. Furthermore, the Security Council had already created a weapons inspection system. This was the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and its role was to monitor and, if necessary, verify the existence of chemical and biological weapons. A similar agency existed for nuclear weapons.

The USA was reluctant to place any faith in these inspection agencies. This was partly because it believed that lengthy diplomacy would only undermine US military pressure on Iraq. Some observers took the view that national self-interest determined the responses of some states that opposed the USA in the UN over Iraq. France was seen as a state wishing to play the role of a global superpower despite its economic and military limitations. The Russians held the view that the USA had not backed them in their quest for a major post-Cold War role in international relations. The Russians also had economic interests in Iraq. Domestic politics appeared to dominate the German stance against America. Domestic German public opinion was against a war with Iraq. There was a popularly held view that the USA was never really interested in multilateral diplomacy. Washington wanted to operate from an unfettered unilateral position and be free to use its superior power against any 'rogue state' that it felt threatened US interests. Perception of a threat was sufficient and there was little need to prove a substantial link with al-Qaeda for example. The USA could not turn to NATO to legitimise its intentions in Iraq because NATO was also divided over its response.

The issue of Iraq in 2003 raised the fundamental problem that continued to face the UN as a peacekeeping organisation. There had to be a collective authorisation for force to be used. The USA's commitment to the so-called Bush Doctrine in 2003 was profoundly inconsistent with the UN's commitment to regulate force through international agreement. The USA's policy of conducting a war against terrorism did great damage to the UN and it caused significant divisions among the international community. It was clear that the Security Council in 2003 was not prepared to endorse decisive preventive action. Substantial links between Iraq and al-Qaeda were not established, nor did Iraq have large amounts of chemical or biological weapons that were operational. There was no active nuclear weapons programme in place. In effect, Iraq did not present a danger to US security nor did it appear to be closely linked to those who did.

As always, the USA was always the most important state in the UN. This was as true after the Cold War had ended as it had been at the height of the Cold War. Militarily and economically the USA was the dominant world power. By the start of the 21st century there was increasing opposition within the UN towards US unilateralism.

Activity

Group discussion

In small groups, discuss why terrorism is such a hard phenomenon for even large organisations like NATO and the UN to fight. Think about the strengths and weaknesses of terrorist activity, including factors such as whether you think terrorists can really shape international relations.

The US invasion of Iraq led to an intensification of this opposition to unilateralism. This issue currently is, and will undoubtedly remain for the immediate future, a major problem for the UN and the consensus upon which it depends.

Darfur, 2003–4

At the start of 2003 a humanitarian crisis began to unfold in the western region of Darfur in the Sudan. Fighting between government forces and rebels from the Sudanese Liberation Army made thousands of people refugees. By 2004 there were 100,000 refugees and a million others displaced. In May 2004, the Security Council finally called upon the Sudanese government to disarm its feared Arab militia groups (the Janjaweed). This proved to be a futile request and went unheeded by the Sudanese authorities. More robust Security Council action was prevented when China and Russia abstained in a Security Council vote.

This outcome illustrated a particular problem that faced the UN. Both Russia and China had economic interests in the Sudan and therefore opposed any UN enforcement measures there. Even the USA displayed its clear self-interest and did nothing significant to push for more substantial UN intervention. The USA did not want to undermine the cooperation it needed from the Sudanese in its own struggle against international terrorism. Equally, Islamic states were not willing to put pressure on other Islamic states. The view was that the Islamic world was already under pressure in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the *Washington Post* concluded, 'Major and minor powers alike are committed only to stopping killing that harms their national interests. Why take political, financial and military risks when there is no strategic or domestic cost to remaining on the sidelines?'

The Darfur crisis illustrated that there was a clear lack of political will to stop the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan. Equally there had been no concerted attempt to prevent it in the first place. Despite this fundamental shortcoming by the UN there had been a growing recognition in the Security Council that humanitarian crises were also threats to international peace and security.

Overview

The post-Cold War era brought a huge increase in the demand for UN interventions. Many observers argued that the end of Cold War superpower rivalry gave the UN the chance to bring long-standing conflicts across the world to a successful conclusion. The post-Cold War period also brought new challenges for the UN. The range of interventions was much wider and more complex than any previous Cold War interventions. Peacekeeping became significantly more complex. The UN's role extended to nation-building as well as peacekeeping. The humanitarian demands placed on the UN exceeded all previous demands. The notion that the end of the Cold War brought with it a new era of open international cooperation is more than merely misleading, it is clearly inaccurate.

Exploring the detail

The Janjaweed

In Arabic Janjaweed means 'a man with a gun on a horse'. The Janjaweed were drawn from nomadic Arab tribes often in conflict with Darfur's settled African farmers. In 2003 the non-Arab Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement embarked on a civil war with the Arab Sudanese government. At this point, the Janjaweed started to attack non-Arab settlements but focused on the ethnic conflict with the non-Arab population.

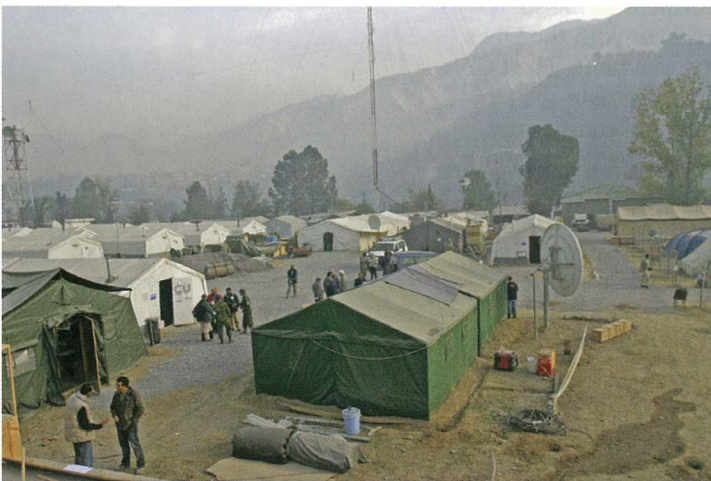


Fig. 5 Humanitarian work in Pakistan

Learning outcomes

In this section you have developed a knowledge and understanding of the impact of the ending of the Cold War. You should be in a position to evaluate the shift in the international order that followed the end of the Cold War and the subsequent response of the superpowers, especially the USA.

In addition you should be able to assess the significance of other influences such as eastern European nationalism and the growth of the EU in international relations from 1991. You have also learnt about the role of the UN and how it was affected by the end of the Cold War.



Examination-style questions

- (1) ‘Rather than making the role of the United Nations easier, the end of the Cold War simply deepened its problems.’ Assess the validity of this view.



It would be useful to have some understanding of the effectiveness of the UN before the end of the Cold War. This question is focused on the effectiveness of the UN as a peacekeeping organisation after a point of significant change. Establish examples of where the UN has had limited success and then consider why that has happened. Was it because of the ending of the Cold War or was it for some other reason?

- (2) ‘In the years 1945 to 1991 the Soviet Union consistently ensured that the Cold War continued.’ Assess the validity of this view.



This type of question is designed to focus on a wide range of issues during the period between 1945 and 2004. In this way it differs from the more specific and slightly narrower questions at the end of previous chapters. The focus of the assessment for this question is on assessing and evaluating the view that the USSR was consistently responsible for the continuance of the Cold War. You need to balance this view against examples of the USSR seeking to shift East–West relations away from a Cold War relationship. There is also the issue of the role of the USA in ensuring the continuance of the Cold War. It is important not to turn this question into a different question. The focus lies with assessing the USSR’s responsibility for the continuance of the Cold War rather than the USA’s responsibility. Reference to the USA is important in establishing why the Cold War lasted so long but it should only be considered in terms of its contribution to the overall balance of the USSR’s responsibility.

You may suggest that the Cold War was started by the USSR. This would show support for the orthodox historiography. There were significant events which underlined the unwillingness of the USSR to bring the Cold War to an end. You could consider the development of the nuclear arms race up to 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the problems over Berlin between 1958 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In 1979 the era of *détente* came to an abrupt end when the USSR invaded Afghanistan. You may also consider the problems over SALT, particularly SALT II and link these to the attitude of the USSR.

This evidence could be balanced against the revisionist view of the origins of the Cold War. You could consider the efforts of Khrushchev to develop peaceful coexistence and the subsequent willingness of the USSR to participate in, and preserve, *détente* during the 1970s. A key issue may be the role of Gorbachev from 1985 in bringing the Cold War to an end. Overall, there are points when the USSR appeared to be a major barrier to bringing the Cold War to an end and others when it was a major contributor to the ending of the Cold War. To strengthen the analysis you could consider the role of the USA in terms of the revisionist analysis, particularly the idea that the USA wanted the Cold War to continue in order to promote its own global power.