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CREATING A RAPID REACTION UN PEACE FORCE

AN ORGANIZATION
TO PREVENT
GENOCIDE AND
PROTECT HUMAN
RIGHTS

P A P E R S B Y :

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Responding to Mass Atrocity

What Can the United Nations Do?

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As part of the preparation for a Summit of the Future expected in 2024, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a policy brief in July 2023 titled “A New Agenda for Peace.” He addressed the seventy-five-year history of UN peace operations by acknowledging that while UN peacekeepers have saved millions of lives, “longstanding unresolved conflicts, driven by complex domestic, geopolitical and transnational factors, and a persistent mismatch between mandates and resource, have exposed its limitations.”¹ These limitations exist in the face of persistent and ongoing needs to save lives and to curtail violence around the world. In June 2023, the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, together with the Texas A&M University School of Law, convened a meeting of experts, “Creating a Rapid Response UN Peace Force to Prevent Genocide and Protect Human Rights,” to take stock of what the UN has done and what it might do to meet these needs into the future. The papers presented here reflect some of the most innovative ideas and action plans advanced to enhance the UN’s capacity to respond to mass atrocity and conflict in a “more versatile, nimble, and adaptable” manner.²

In a 2021 study, economists Charles H. Anderton and Jurgen Brauer wrote the following:

¹ UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace* (July 2023).

² *Id.*

Counting conservatively, data show about 100 million mass atrocity-related deaths since 1900. A distinct empirical phenomenon, mass atrocities are events of enormous scale, severity, and brutality, occur in wartime and in peacetime, are geographically widespread, occur with surprising frequency, under various systems of governance, and can be long-lasting in their effects on economic and human development, wellbeing, and wealth, more so when nonfatal physical injuries and mental trauma also are considered.³

Whether these are classified as genocide or not, these episodes involve killing of civilians on a mass scale (minimum of 1,000 is often used as a threshold) both by state and non-state actors. The emergence of non-state actors as the perpetrators of mass killing from approximately 1985 to 2015, as well as state actors, further account for an increase in such episodes during this time.⁴ The other reality to consider is that these episodes of mass killing can last over years with great severity and brutality. Anderton and Brauer estimate nearly seven million deaths attributed to three episodes alone of mass killing spanning twenty-six years. Cambodia (1975-9), Pakistan (1971), and

³ Charles H. Anderton and Jurgen Brauer, “Mass Atrocity and Their Prevention,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 2021, 59(4), 1240–1292 available at <https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.20201458>.

⁴ *Id.* 1246.

Sudan (1983-2002).⁵ Horrific as such numbers are, they do not capture all of the mental and physical stress that accompany episodes of mass killing and the many lives lost below the 1,000-person threshold. Reasons for mass killing are mixed and may include ethnic, religious, or cultural differences; economic disparity; or other forms of scarcity and displacement.

Decision-making at an international level to respond to mass killings has often been slow, haphazard, and ineffective. Reasons for these poor responses may include competing interests and agendas, decision-making structures that are not suited for rapid responses, and the unavailability of tools and means to respond appropriately and effectively. Since its founding, the United Nations has made great strides to respond to worldwide conflicts allowing states to settle disputes or otherwise create conditions for peace. From observer missions to fact-finding, to a full range of peacekeeping and peace building operations, the UN's work has been recognized at least twice by receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace. The first was awarded to Lester Pearson, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, for his role to deploy a UN force—the United Nations Emergency Force—to separate the warring parties in the 1956 Suez Crisis. (Pearson would later become prime minister of Canada.) Peacekeeping was awarded a prize in its own right in 1988 for the lives it saved. Looking at the milestones in the development of an idea that was loosely authorized by the UN Charter, we see the

potential for the UN to address crises where it may not have an explicit mandate, but where there is a willingness to address a situation. The need today is no less urgent or compelling than it was decades ago, and an opportunity to examine possible mechanisms for response are important.

We invite ongoing consideration of the proposals and ideas presented here to address the important question of how the UN can best equip itself to protect the lives of civilians suffering from extreme violence and killing. Ideas alone cannot save lives without the action to do so. Understanding how our individual actions might make a difference is what we hope will result from our efforts.

⁵ Id. 1247.

The Way Forward

The Case for a UN Rapid Response Force

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Executive Summary

1. Following up on a UN Charter provision that the UN should be able to take immediate action to maintain international peace and security, Sir Brian Urquhart, Hans Van Mierlo, and Carl Kaysen proposed that the UN create a permanent “immediately available elite force directly recruited from volunteers worldwide...that might give the Security Council the capacity to display strength and determination at a point where larger disasters could be avoided.”¹ H. Peter Langille followed up with a distinct but related concept of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service.
2. An immediate response in Rwanda might have cost 300 million dollars. Delay led to loss of over 800,000 lives and the cost of billions in relief and reconstruction.
3. The UN High Panel and Brahimi have reported that calling upon individual nations has resulted in slow deployment, which has been the greatest impediment to timely and effective peace operations.
4. Regional forces in the Balkans and Africa have taken time to assemble, have been met with derision and—sometimes with good reason—are suspected of bias towards different parties to the conflict, as opposed to the true ideals of UN responsibility

to protect against genocide and major human rights violations.

5. Articles 42 and 47 of the UN Charter already provide the framework for establishing a UN Emergency Peace Force.
6. There are solid legal arguments and precedents put forward by scholars that the veto power would not necessarily prevent the deployment of such a force.
7. The Global Futures Forum met in 2023 and highly recommended the creation of a UN Emergency Peace Force and that this be included at the 2024 Summit of the Future.

A Quick and Relevant History of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

From its inception, many of the founders of the UN envisioned a responsive, proactive force that could take immediate action “as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.”² In 1948, UN Secretary General Trygve Lie proposed, in succession, a permanent UN Guard Force, a UN Legion, and a UN Voluntary Reserve,³ but these ideas were abandoned because they received no support from the major powers.⁴ The United States and USSR in particular were concerned that a permanent force might act against their interests especially in the developing Cold War proxy wars between the two superpowers.⁵ For the most part, the UN could only agree upon the

dispatch of lightly armed truce observers to hot spots in the Middle East and Africa. The end of the Cold war reinvigorated the original expectation that the UN should have the ability to quickly field a strong unit to maintain peace and even prevent aggression.⁶ After all, Russia, the US, and the P5 clearly did *not* have contrary interests—they were not directly at odds—in every troubled or unstable nation in the entire world. In the 1990s, the UN Security Council sanctioned some operations in Cambodia, Angola, and Somalia but forces were “weak...and stymied by delays in getting states to contribute trained” units.⁷ The delays were painfully evident during the horribly brutal ethnic conflict in Bosnia (1992-1995) and Rwandan Genocide (1994), which when combined cost hundreds of thousands of innocent lives.⁸ Many people never expected to see the intentional massacre of innocent men, women and children after World War II—lined up and shot or killed with machetes—but that is exactly what happened in the Balkans and in Africa.

This led to Sir Brian Urquhart from the UK, and Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo from the Netherlands, to strongly advocate a proposal first put forth by Carl Kaysen (John F. Kennedy’s national security advisor) that the UN create a permanent, “immediately available elite force directly recruited from volunteers worldwide...that [which] might give the Security Council the capacity to display strength and determination at a point where larger disasters could be avoided.”⁹ This suggestion was not limited to peacekeeping in settled conflicts but

envisioned a fast military response to external threats as well as enforcing a ceasefire in an incipient civil war.¹⁰

Dr. H. Peter Langille has written extensively on developing a United Nations Emergency Peace Service.¹¹ He proposes a comprehensive, well qualified and permanent dedicated UN force composed of up to 14,000 volunteer civilian, police, and military professionals capable of both immediate military intervention operations as well as humanitarian, health, and environmental missions.¹² This is a distinct but related concept to that advocated by Urquhart, Van Mierlo, and Kaysen.

As Professor Tad Daley stated at the June 20th, 2023 Washington D.C. conference on “Creating a UN Rapid Response UN Peace Force or Organization to Prevent Genocide and Protect Human Rights,” both concepts would “save money and save lives.” There would be no shortage of individuals willing to volunteer for an army to “serve all of humankind and enforce a universal rule of law.”¹³ Dr. Peter Langille’s book addresses at length the cost of action versus the worldwide consequences and significant financial costs to the UN of inaction.¹⁴

In regards the cost to the UN, General Romeo Dallaire, commander of the small UN contingent in Rwanda, clearly made the key point that applies to so many world conflicts, stating:

Prompt access to a force of 5000 well trained soldiers could have prevented much of the (Rwandan) genocide. In response to pleas for

further troops, which might have cost 200-300 million dollars, the international community simply delayed for three months. After initially refusing to help, while 800,000 people were slaughtered, it then poured several billion dollars into relief for refugees and reconstruction aid.¹⁵

To date, the UN has not embraced these important ideas. The UN has tried various formulations in which *nations* would be called upon for help, such as a Standby Arrangements System¹⁶ and a Standby Forces Brigade at High Readiness Brigade.¹⁷ It even discussed private military contractors but concluded that “evidence had shown that PMCs were capable of human rights abuses and severe criminal acts.”¹⁸ All of these concepts have failed. In 2015, the UN High Panel on Peace Operations echoed the findings of the 2000 Brahimi report. “Slow deployment,” they wrote, “is one of the greatest impediments to more effective peace operations... Reliance on ad hoc solutions (drawing upon nations) for rapidly deploying new missions and for crisis response has limited the timeliness and effectiveness of international response.”¹⁹

The problems inherent in calling upon individual nations for help are self-evident. Most governments are ultimately dependent upon the will of the people, and a nation’s electorate generally does not want to sacrifice its own soldiers where there is not a clear ‘national interest.’ President Clinton faced this dilemma in Rwanda where the loss of U.S. soldiers in Somalia strongly

influenced the decision not to send U.S. troops to stop the genocide in that country.²⁰ As Professor Eyal Mayroz explained at the above noted June 20th conference in Washington, most national governments are reluctant to act without pressure from the public, and although the public for a short time has compassion when they hear of atrocities, when they read of one such crisis after another, they experience “compassion fatigue” and do not rally to urge their government to act.²¹

The UN has in recent years also emphasized the development and employment of “regional forces” to stop the violence.²² Some state that NATO’s actions in the Balkan’s demonstrate how local forces can stop genocide and atrocities. But this argument ignores the fact that it took many years for NATO to finally act against Serbia and other nations in the former Yugoslavia while ethnic cleansing proceeded without hindrance.²³ During a genocide in the Congo, the UN sanctioned an Intervention Brigade and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), but they were met with derision and opposition based in part on fear of the nationalistic priorities of the UN sanctioned forces.²⁴

A review of the latest ‘regional force,’ the East African Community coalition (Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda with Rwandan influence), designed to quell the constant conflict in the Eastern Congo, reveals a snake pit of conflicting interests and suspected bias among all the

participating nations.²⁵ In 2011, the UN authorized action to stop atrocities in Libya, but what followed was a NATO led coalition of the US, the UK, and France which, in the eyes of some, was not motivated by the ideals of the international responsibility to protect against genocide, but rather to further the decades long goal of NATO to achieve regime change in Gaddafi's Libya.²⁶

Thus, the need for agreement on practical ideas to get the UN to create a UN Permanent All Volunteer Rapid Reaction Force to Prevent Genocide and Protect Human Rights is a subject which needs immediate public attention and UN action.

The UN Charter Opens the Door for Employment of a UN Rapid Response Peace Organization

In an exchange of messages with Ambassador Todd Buchwald, former head of the Office of Criminal Justice at the U.S. State Department, after the June 20 Conference on Creating a UN Peace Force or Service, Ambassador Buchwald emphasized that some of the mechanisms for organizing such a robust, rapid reaction UN Peace Organization are already in place.²⁷ Specifically, Article 42 states that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) may take action by air, sea or land forces as necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security, and Article 47 provides for the establishment of a Military Staff Committee to assist the UNSC on all questions relating to the Security Council's military

requirements for the employment and command of forces placed at its disposal. The Military Staff Committee should assist the UNSC in making plans for the application of armed force and shall be responsible for the strategic direction of the armed forces utilized. The committee would be composed of the chiefs of staff of the permanent members of the UNSC and those invited to join because of the particular circumstances of the threat to peace and security. It is true that Article 43 provides for the negotiation of "agreements" with member nations to provide armed forces and Article 45 states that members should hold immediately available contingents for international enforcement action, but there is nothing in the charter that states that forces *must* come from nation states pursuant to Articles 43 and 45. In fact, the United States and other major powers have not negotiated any Article 43 agreements.

The UN Security Council Veto Power Would Not Necessarily Prevent its Deployment

There is always the concern that a UNSC veto might block deployment of a peace force, but it must be remembered that the P5 are not always on opposite sides of every conflict. There were no disputes between the major powers in Rwanda or Burundi, for example, and there should be none in Somalia. Furthermore, if a nation requests help for a conflict completely within its borders, there is a question of whether the UNSC is even required to approve.²⁸

The UN Secretary General's 2005 High Level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change also took steps to strongly discourage the utilization of the veto in all situations. The Responsibility to Protect principle was adopted stating that when a sovereign government cannot protect its population from humanitarian catastrophes "the responsibility should be taken up by the wider international community," including military response to genocide and serious violations of international humanitarian law.²⁹ The panel further noted that the veto power, although necessary to create the UN, was anachronistic and should *not* be used in humanitarian crisis.³⁰

But even if a nation decides to exercise the veto power, there are potential legal avenues that may provide a method to get around it in a humanitarian disaster. At the June 21 - June 22 Academic Council on the United Nations Conference, Professor Vesselin Popovski, vice dean at Jindal Global University, highlighted the Uniting for Peace concept that was first utilized by the United Nations General Assembly to avoid a deadlocked UNSC during the Korean War in 1950. Under General Assembly Resolution 377 A, when the Security Council (because of a lack of unanimity among its five permanent members) fails to act as required to maintain international peace and security, the UNGA can convene an emergency special session to recommend appropriate collective measures including the use of armed force.³¹ Professor Popovski noted that UN GA 377A has not been overruled by the International Court of Justice.

On the same panel at the ACUNS conference, Jennifer Trahan from NYU, author of *Existing Legal Limits to the Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes*³², explained why she believes members of the P5 should not be able to block action by veto in the face of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Among other arguments, Professor Trahan notes that the UN Charter is subsidiary to *jus cogens* norms so that a veto that permits genocide is without legal authority. In addition, members of the P5 have agreed to the Genocide Convention and Geneva Conventions so that a veto that enables genocide and war crimes that are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions would be a violation of their treaty commitments.

Recent and Upcoming Events Promise the Opportunity for a Serious Discussion

The 2023 New Agenda for Peace did not overtly call for the creation of a UN peace force or service. UN Secretary General Guterres did acknowledge, however, that while peacekeepers have saved millions of lives, "longstanding unresolved conflicts, driven by complex domestic, geopolitical and transnational factors, and a persistent mismatch between mandates and resource, have exposed its limitations."³³ Guterres asked for ideas to be presented to the UN Summit of the Future 2024.

The Global Futures Forum, established by the Coalition for the UN We Need, met in 2023 and recommended a series of UN

improvements for the Summit of the Future. One of those ideas directly addressed the “mismatch” mentioned by Secretary General Guterrez. Specifically, number three under Peace and Security recommendations was to “Standup a United Nations Peace Service.”³⁴ As noted previously, a UN Peace Service is a distinct but related concept to a UN Peace Force as it envisions, in the words of Professor Langille, a well-qualified and permanent UN force composed of up to 14,000 volunteer civilian, police and military professionals capable of both immediate military intervention operations as well as humanitarian, health and environmental missions.³⁵

The recommendation of the Global Futures forum is a significant event. It is strongly

supported by the arguments of the scholars and practitioners previously identified in this paper and others. In light of the findings of the Brahimi report and the 2015 report of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations regards slow, ineffective UN intervention³⁶ and the insightful opinions of so many experts, the creation of such a permanent volunteer UN rapid reaction force would appear to be a very prudent course of action. Put simply, it would be common sense. The inescapable conclusion that follows is that scholars and practitioners should immediately work hard to place the idea of a UN Peace Force before the Summit of the Future 2024 and from there dedicate themselves to the prompt creation of such an organization.

¹ Id.

² U.N Charter Article 42

³ Dan Hayes Griffin, *Improving United Nations Rapid Reaction Capability*, (2008) unpublished Honors Thesis, University of Oregon, on file Dept. of Political science University of Oregon. Pp7-8.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id.

⁶ Id.

⁷ See Adam Roberts, *Proposals for UN Standing Forces, A Critical History*, In the *United Nations Security Council and War, Evolution of Thought and Practice Since 1945*, 101-102 (Vaughn Lowe et al. eds. 2008).

⁸ Id at 107.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id. At 108.

¹¹ H. Peter Langille, *Developing a UN Emergency Peace Service* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016.)

¹² Id.

¹³ Tad Daley, UN Conference Bush School of Government, June 20th, 2023, see also Daley, *An Army of Humanity to Fight Crimes Against Humanity*, Responsible Statecraft.org, May 1st, 2020.

¹⁴ See Langille, supra note 10, pp. 73-80.

¹⁵ Romeo Dallaire quoted in Langille, supra note 10, at pp. 74-75.

¹⁶ See Griffin, supra note 2

¹⁷ Jonas von Freiesleben, *Denmark Remains Committed to UN Peacekeeping-but is Contemplating SHIRBRIG Pull Out, CTR For UN Reform*, August 6 2008, <http://www.centerforunrefor.org>.

¹⁸ Deven Desai, *Have Your Cake and Eat It Too; Proposal for a Layered Approach to Regulating Private Military Contractors*, 39 U.S.F. L Rev. 825, 847-849 (2005)

¹⁹ Report of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations 195-196, UN Doc A/70/95 (June 17th 2015.) See also Griffin note 2.

²⁰ See the interviews of State Department officials and Clinton’s speech of apology in Africa in the outstanding PBS documentary “Ghosts of Rwanda” (2004). See also *In Search of International Justice* (Bulldog Films 2005) regards genocide in the Balkans. See also Daley, supra note 19 for review of this example.

²¹ Eyal Mayroz, at Bush School Conference on Creating a Rapid Response UN Peace Force to

Prevent Genocide and Protect Human Rights, June 20th, 2023 Washington D.C.

²²See statement of UN Secretary General Guterres quoted at <https://apnews.com/article/un-new-agenda-peace-tensions-secretarygeneral-20e8ed9373307b6c0a8bd9143a2c148e>

²³ See Simon Chesterman, *Leading from Behind, The Responsibility to Protect, the Obama Doctrine and Humanitarian Intervention After Libya*, 25 *Ethics and International Affairs* 279 (2011).

²⁴ <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/monusco-fails-at-peacekeeping---critics/6684061.html>

²⁵ <https://www.africanews.com/2023/06/16/east-african-force-stalls-in-eastern-drc/>

²⁶ Alistair Edgar. At Bush School Conference on Creating a Rapid Response UN Peace Force, *Supra* note 12, June 20th 2023.

²⁷ E-mail exchange between the author and Ambassador Todd Buchwald, June 26, 2023.

²⁸ Professor Alistair Edgar at June 20th, 2023 conference, *supra* note 12.

²⁹ *A more Secure World, Our Shared Responsibility*, UN Doc. A/59/565 2004

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ UN Doc UN GA Resolution A/RES/377A 3 November 1950.

³² Jennifer Trahan, Cambridge University Press, 2020

³³ UN Secretary General Guterres, *supra* note 21.

³⁴ See Global Futures Forum, <https://c4unwn.org/wcontent/uploads/2023/03/GF>

³⁵ *Supra* note 11.

³⁶ *Supra* note 18.

Why a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS)?

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Executive Summary

1. The history behind a UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) has changed over time.
2. A UNEPS is to be a permanent, standing UN formation ready for immediate deployment upon authorization of the UN Security Council.
3. Unlike prior proposals, a UNEPS is to complement existing UN arrangements, to be multidimensional (i.e., civilian, police & military) and multifunctional (for humanitarian, security, health and environmental crises).
4. To ensure rapid and reliable UN responses, a UNEPS would draw on dedicated individuals, recruited world-wide (selected, trained and employed by the UN), rather than national contingents.
5. With a United Nations Emergency Peace Service acting as a standing ‘UN 911’ first responder, the organization could finally address four tough, longstanding challenges.¹
6. An outline of the benefits of the organization is given.
7. A UNEPS is also to be a gender-equitable service.

More Relevant Every Year

Longstanding problems exist for the UN’s rapid response to international crises at the cost of frequent delays, violent deaths and human suffering, diminished credibility and precious opportunities lost—the phenomena of ‘too little too late’—and other high costs. Although rapid deployment has been an institutional priority for thirty years, UN response times have actually slowed. This system requires six to 12 months or more to plan, attract national contributors, negotiate terms, find and rent equipment, arrange transport, and then deploy. This is why UN peace operations are often characterized as “too-little, too late.”² Similarly problematic is the UN shift to post-conflict stabilization, which does not start until fighting stops. Rather than respond promptly to prevent situations deteriorating, conflicts tend to escalate and spread, then require latter, larger, longer UN operations at far higher costs.

Since the early 1990s, there has been much talk about preventing violent conflict, but there has been very little progress in that direction.³ Similarly, followers of this issue have heard a lot about the protection of civilians—especially after The Responsibility To Protect—but very little progress has been made in operationalizing protection.⁴ People are experiencing more crises world-wide, and the UN’s capacity to respond effectively is already stretched thin. In complex emergencies, it can be very difficult to address human needs. A new era of geo-political confrontation has shifted the focus to preparing for more war at ever-higher costs and risks. Perceived national security require-

ments, especially for nuclear and conventional deterrence, continue to stymie progress on disarmament.

Without a UN capacity to act, the world witnessed humanitarian crises in Rwanda, Srebrenica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka, Darfur, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Tigray, the Ukraine and Sudan – the tragic consequences of slow or no reaction to fast breaking conflicts. Despite the promise of “never again,” mass atrocities occur again and again. In the words of the late Sir Brian Urquhart:

I am convinced that the UN, if it is to be taken seriously in the peace and security field, has to have some capacity to act effectively on the ground within 24 to 48 hours of a decision by the security council. Every year provides examples of what happens when it can't do that, and until it can ...the UN is not going to work very well.⁵

Too little has changed since UN General Assembly President, Mogens Lykketoft conceded, “the UN today remains insufficiently equipped to meet its overriding 1945 objective: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”⁶ Unsurprisingly, a recent Global Census Poll found “widespread skepticism that the United Nations is well-prepared for the challenges of the next decade.”⁷ The UN system works surprisingly well on numerous global challenges.⁸ UN peace operations are frequently cited as the most visible, viable, and important work of

the UN, but it is also widely understood that the organization lacks sufficient capacity to respond rapidly and reliably to prevent armed conflict, to protect people, and to encourage disarmament. As a result, this current UN system is unlikely to inspire a wider constituency of support or the political will and financial support.

Now, with overlapping emergencies and trendlines already suggesting a higher incidence of armed conflict ahead, is it not only responsible to plan and prepare for it? It is also important to recall the words of US President Dwight D. Eisenhower: “The United Nations represents man's best organized hope to substitute the conference table for the battlefield.”⁹ Clearly, the crucial challenge is to develop a more effective UN; one with a capacity to promptly fulfill assigned tasks; one that can inspire widely. A UNEPS is viable UN policy options to help with each. And it is not too hard to understand either.

Ten Core Principles of a UN Peace Force

- A permanent standing, integrated UN formation;
- Highly trained and well-equipped;
- Ready for immediate deployment upon authorization of the Security Council;
- Multidimensional (civilians, police and military);

- Multifunctional (capable of diverse assignments with specialized skills for security, humanitarian, health and environmental crises);
- Composed of 13,500 dedicated personnel (recruited professionals, selected, trained and employed by the UN);
- Developed to ensure regional and gender equitable representation;
- Co-located at a designated UN base under an operational headquarters and two mobile mission headquarters;
- At sufficient strength to operate in high-threat environments; and,
- To complement existing UN arrangements, with a dedicated UN service to cover the initial six months until Member States can deploy, if needed.¹⁰

The UNEPS ideas stemmed from the official Canadian government study and report, “Towards A Rapid Reaction Capability For The United Nations.”¹¹ Arguably, the most distinctive feature of a UNEPS is that it would be a dedicated standing UN formation, prepared and ready to serve in diverse UN operations.¹² At the forefront, it was understood that there was no clean-slate to build afresh on a shared vision, but that this development would have to arise within a UN system characterized by 193 diverse member states, the fifteen members of the

Security Council and a mesmerizing array of complications and constraints. Clearly, a new UN service would have to complement existing arrangements.

Why Not a Standing UN Force?

A “standing UN force” was announced as the Canadian government’s initial objective.¹³ Within the year, briefing teams were deployed for consultations with national capitals world-wide. Among the UN member states, they found little (if any) interest in a standing UN force. As reported, “...it is apparent that no broad or even significant international support, much less consensus, currently exists for taking such a step in the short-to-medium term.”

The concept of a ‘standing UN force’ would attract opposition but it would not attract the political will, or the funding required. As a result, there have been neither substantive proposals nor a constituency for a standing UN force since the mid-90s. Another force was also unpopular among key sectors of civil society. A new concept would be needed.

By 2000, it was understood that government officials had dropped the ball, and the early idea of a UN Standing Emergency Group had acquired little traction. Following an International Peace Institute event on UN rapid deployment, Sir Brian Urquhart insisted on a new concept and an approach that might appeal widely. By 2002, a book elaborating on a proposed United Nations Emergency Service had renewed interest among

civil society and an American NGO network.¹⁴ At a 2003 conference with this network, there was agreement for a modest expansion of the concept to a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).¹⁵ Why a service? People tend to appreciate services, particularly prompt, accessible services, especially when there is trouble or an emergency. And it is far tougher for those opposing the idea to argue against a UN 911 when most here already have access to emergency services. In order to succeed, a UNEPS would have to be a more sophisticated option than a force. To be relevant in contemporary and future UN operations, a UNEPS will require a multidimensional composition of civilian, police, and military personnel. In the aftermath of the Cold War, UN peacekeeping expanded, initially with a shift from traditional Chapter VI missions to multidimensional operations, then to Chapter VII with more robust capacities and mandates, including protection of civilians.¹⁶ By the mid-1990s, efforts were underway to develop more comprehensive (integrated) UN peace operations that drew on a wider array of civilian, police and military skills and expertise.¹⁷

It is increasingly apparent that success is likely to depend on the speed and extent to which the UN provides a sophisticated mix of promising incentives to restore hope and cooperation, and to the extent it provides robust disincentives to establish security, deter violence, and create a safe space for wider participation and dialogue. At the outset of a mission, stemming violence and protecting civilians may be the first priorities, but such activities may have to be accompa-

nied by protection of the environment, peacebuilding efforts, and the reconstruction of critical infrastructure. By including a wider range of emergency services, it might also be more appealing to a wider range of parties, in theatre and abroad.

Any new UN service would also have to be capable of performing diverse tasks. Notably, no one role such as genocide prevention or rapid deployment, as important as they are, will suffice to secure or maintain support in the UN system. Those roles arise infrequently. Neither the UN nor the MS will pay for a standing formation that may only be required every third to fifth year. A new standing UN service will need to be busy, widely valued and seen as worthwhile to avoid being axed under yearly budgetary pressures. To be cost-effective, a standing service must be multi-functional and capable of providing coherent responses to various crises. Security, humanitarian, health, and environmental roles are already on the UN agenda and likely to be increasingly important in the years ahead. Complex emergencies often require assistance with each.

Improving the UN's capacity for rapid deployment of peace operations was a primary objective from the start. What the UN will continue to need is a rapid and reliable first responder for mission start-up and the initial stages of demanding operations. A first in, first out capacity limited to six-month deployments is feasible. A UN 911 emergency service is also more complementary, appealing, and cost-effective than another large force or army.

With a UN first responder for the initial six months of demanding operations, governments are likely to be more receptive as they would not face the immediate pressure and risks of deploying their people into a high-risk hot spot. The UN member states would retain their role as troop and police contributors to the UN, but usually only after the initial six months once the risks were lower. Then their decision-making, preparation, and training would be under less pressure to respond immediately.

Recruited Volunteers: The Only Way to Ensure Rapid & Reliable UN Responses

Without a UN capacity to respond, there remains little to prevent conflict from arising and even less to stem the escalation and spread of violence into armed conflict. The UN Standby Arrangements System (UN-SAS) and its successor, the UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (UN-PCRS), may be helpful on occasion, but neither are sufficient for generating rapid and reliable deployment of national personnel to UN peace operations.¹⁸ Neither system can offer any assurance of help when needed.¹⁹ Understandably, troop and police contributors are reluctant to send their valued personnel into operations abroad that may entail high risks.

Thirty years ago, the official Canadian report confirmed the need for a different approach drawing on individuals volunteering for a new UN service. As noted,

UN volunteers offer the best prospect of a completely reliable, well-trained rapid -reaction capability. Without the need to consult national authorities, the UN could cut response time significantly and volunteers could be deployed within hours of a Security Council decision. As the 1995 Commission on Global Governance noted, ‘The very existence of an immediately available and effective UN Volunteer Force could be a deterrent in itself. It could also give important support for negotiations and peaceful settlement of disputes. It is high time that this idea – a United Nations Volunteer Force – was made a reality.’ No matter how difficult this goal now seems, it deserves continued study, with a clear process for assessing its feasibility over the long term.²⁰

The proposed UNEPS is to draw on dedicated individuals volunteering to serve within a standing UN formation. These would be recruited professionals, carefully screened, selected on the basis of merit and skill and then, employed by the UN for extensive training and preparation.

1325: Gender-equitable

In October 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 urged “all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts.”²¹ Wom-

en have demonstrated unique abilities and skills in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and across the spectrum of peace operations. While progress is evident on Res 1325, especially within the UN and in UN peace operations, many national militaries and police services remain reluctant to increase the role of women in peace and security. The proposed UNEPS, with its distinctly gender-equitable composition, is another way to address this crucial transformation. This would also help to raise standards system-wide and improve prospects for peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Size

The proposed composition of 13,500 personnel under an operational HQ and two mobile mission HQ's is deemed a credible capacity for assigned tasks. The military elements within (two mobile brigade groups) are sufficiently robust to manage security, self-defense, and the defense of the mission and protection of civilians. Notably, a UNEPS is not for mid-to-high-intensity warfighting, nor for enforcement at the strategic or operational level. Yet this service must be competent in Chapter VII operations that entail modest enforcement at the tactical level, primarily to deter and stop spoilers and belligerent parties.

The modular formation of a UNEPS allows for flexible responses tailored to mission-specific requirements. From an initial technical reconnaissance, the operational headquarters can identify the appropriate response and effectively plug and play the de-

ployable elements needed. With two mission HQs leading similar formations, one may be deployed while the other provides logistics support in cooperation with the UN Department of Operational Support, as well as an assurance of prompt augmentation if needed.

Four potential benefits

First, it would be fast. UN peace operations would improve with a standing first responder to manage the initial six months of demanding operations. Instead of taking six months-to-a year or more to deploy national contingents, there would be immediate access to a dedicated UN service to address a wider array of emergencies. It is far easier to prevent conflicts and protect civilians when help arrives promptly before conflicts escalate and violence spreads. As with a police or defense effort, it is best to be known to have credible means to deter aggression and, when required, the means to intervene to stop crimes. In practice, this usually works by having a legitimate capacity that is recognized and ready to respond as needed.

A standing UNEPS would convey a legitimate presence ready 24/7 to discourage violence. Its deployable elements should be sufficient to deter most, if not all belligerents, to operate in high-risk environments and to intervene if needed to stop aggressive parties. Aside from an array of civilian teams to provide essential services, there would be sufficient police to restore law and order, as well as a military formation to deter aggression and maintain security. Thus, a UNEPS would clearly be a more reliable and rapid

first responder; one that could also serve as a vanguard, a strategic reserve, and a modest security guarantor, both to deter violent crime and respond, when necessary, to prevent conflict and protect civilians.

A UNEPS is to deliver more assistance faster and in a more sophisticated manner. Small teams of experts and planners are included to coordinate the larger formations' immediate and subsequent responses to diverse crises. With its modular formation, UNEPS deployments can be tailored to various mission-specific requirements.

Second, it would be useful. In what's increasingly a global neighborhood, there will be a greater need for universal emergency services. A UNEPS would provide prompt care and help, with an array of useful services in complex emergencies where others either cannot or will not. As an integrated first responder, a UNEPS is not limited to simply stopping direct violence, but also extends to initiating quick-impact and long-term projects. With a focus on human needs, it should help to counter structural violence (exploitation and exclusion), and stem cultural violence. By including specialists in conflict resolution and mediation; human rights monitors and educators; peacebuilding advisory units; and medical teams, there is a far better prospect of stemming or solving a crisis. While relatively small in size, this ounce of prevention would be worth a ton for a cure.

A UNEPS would inevitably entail a substantive investment. Start-up costs would be in the range of \$3.5 billion (USD), with annual

recurring costs of approximately \$1.5 billion and incremental costs for field operations of approximately \$1.2 billion. These costs would likely be shared proportionally among 193 Member States as part of each nation's assessed share of the UN regular budget. A UNEPS would not only help to prevent the escalation of volatile conflicts and deter groups from armed violence; it could also drastically cut the size, the length, and the frequency of UN operations. Even with success in just one of these areas, it should provide a substantive return on the investment.

Third, it would be secure. A UNEPS would be an emergency security provider to offset fears and encourage wider disarmament. This is not a new idea, but one that's now urgent. As early as 1961, officials in the US State Department acknowledged in 'Freedom From War' that preventing war and encouraging wider disarmament "can only be achieved" by a more effective UN with a UN Peace Force to safeguard legitimate interests.

The 'security dilemma' driving numerous states to arm-up in response to anarchy and uncertainty over potentially aggressive neighbors needs to be offset by a UN assurance of support. Similarly, it should be understood that progress in wider disarmament and even the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) depends on a coherent alternative to nuclear and conventional deterrence. The alternative for both need not be similar to what exists that is large or powerfully destructive. It needs to be credible, respected, and widely valued.

As an emergency security provider, the likely roles of a UNEPS would be similar to that of a ‘first-responder,’ a tripwire, a vanguard and a standing presence to dissuade, deter and, respond rapidly if necessary. The minimal deterrent and modest military capacity within are appropriate and likely to be adequate.

In this capacity, a UNEPS does not require heavy military elements nor a capacity for mid-to-high-intensity warfighting. In representing the international community, it is unlikely to encounter violent resistance from any national armed force. If needed for back-up and support, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (France, China, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom) will continue to have ample capacity in the near term. But they should not need so much in the long-term.

Further, a UN that could respond rapidly and reliably to prevent armed conflict would offset the need for nuclear and conventional deterrence, which underpin the current system of mutually assured destruction and our ‘balance of terror.’ And with a credible and legitimate UN capacity to offset fears and to deter aggression, a UNEPS would provide an incentive for countries to scale back on preparing for more war. UN Member States would no longer need to devote a large share of their resources to maintaining a large armed force for their own protection and national security.

Within a few years, there would be no legitimate basis for offensive force projection or

expeditionary capacity. Weapon sales would decline, with fewer threats and less violent conflict. And that should also help to offset the ‘unwarranted influence’ now pushing for further confrontation. Then, governments would have sufficient resources to address our shared climate emergency, sustainable development, and real social needs.

In short, the proposed UNEPS offers a solution to multiple problems. So, this initiative may yet appeal to, and help to build bridges of support and solidarity with those working on women, peace and security, disarmament, common security, global governance, sustainable development, and the environmental community. Realizing that potential remains an uphill challenge.

Progress

Although progress on a UNEPS is hard-won, the idea continues to move up. Two earlier US House resolutions (H-Res 180 & H-Res 213) acknowledged a UNEPS “...could save millions of lives and billions of dollars and is in the interests of the United States.” In 2017, the British Labour Party raised a UNEPS as a peace priority and promptly discovered wider receptivity to the idea. Over the past two years, a network of transnational NGOs agreed to partner in support of the proposed UNEPS. In January, the proposal was submitted to the UN team working on their new Agenda for Peace.

In February, after consultations world-wide, the Global Futures Forum of The Coalition for The UN We Need, selected a UNEPS

(out of 40 peace & security proposals) for ‘The Peoples Pact for The Future,’ which is to be raised at the 2024 UN Summit of the Future. Earlier in November, a UNEPS was included on a list of five proposals for Our Common Agenda Discussion Series. Notably, the People’s Declaration of June 2020 explicitly asked for more standing capacities available on short notice for UN peace operations.

This initiative will have to do more to be prepared for the 2024 UN Summit of the Future. Unfortunately, even with progress in raising the idea, the political environment remains turbulent and divisive. A recent drive for further confrontation inhibits progress on shared global challenges, including cooperation on UN reform. Deep cynicism over any progress in UN reform is back. The need for substantive UN reform has been evident for thirty years. Yet, another lesson-learned is that the official preference for pragmatic, incremental UN reform (the tippy-toe approach) simply cannot keep pace with a rapidly globalizing world. This approach repeatedly failed to deliver on UN rapid deployment, on prevention of armed conflict, on operationalizing protection of civilians and it has been insufficient to encourage wider disarmament.

Speaking to a recent G20 meeting, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres repeated his advocacy for bold steps, noting that, “Our world is in a difficult moment of transition... our multilateral institutions reflect a bygone age... We need effective international institutions rooted in 21st century realities and based on the UN Charter and interna-

tional law.” Regrettably, the new UN Agenda for Peace contains no bold steps. And with nothing to inspire, the UN has little, if any, chance to motivate or mobilize a constituency. In the absence of bold substantive ideas, there is unlikely to be the political will or financial support needed in the near-term. This current crisis seems vaguely similar to Antonio Gramsci’s ‘interregnum,’ where the old is dying and the new cannot be born, despite a great variety of morbid symptoms appearing. But on this occasion, the crisis is more likely to be temporal.

The future, if there is to be one, will depend on far deeper cooperation. System changes must happen soon, even in the UN system. Paradigm shifts do happen when prevailing systems are deemed inadequate or failing and, when another option is widely viewed as better. One of the first lessons learned in this UNEPS effort was that when the need for such a capacity was urgent and evident, the prior preparation of a widely appealing plan was not evident and nor was a constituency of support. This initiative is a response to both. Another timely understanding is that it’s only in the aftermath of tragic wars and/or genocides that the UN Member States consider substantive reforms and new approaches. The next opportune moment isn’t far off. Even with a slim chance to help save millions of lives and trillions of dollars, it’s important to be better prepared.

Conclusion

The proposed United Nations Emergency Peace Service is one step toward sustainable

common security and another step to ‘save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.’ It’s no panacea, just a coherent option for a more effective United Nations. Peace operations would improve with a ‘UN 911 first responder’ to prevent armed conflict, protect civilians and provide prompt help and security. That’s also a key step to encourage wider disarmament and to start an overdue shift from a dysfunctional war-prone system to a UN centered global peace system.

Soon, even the P-5 members of the UN Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States) will need viable policy options, especially those with the potential to provide huge savings and that represent a win-win solution to their and the world’s more pressing challenges.

Idealism—planning a better world—must be revived fast. There is an urgent need for bold, innovative, and transformative ideas. A big joint project for a more effective UN might even help to restore P-5 cooperation. As William Frye observed in his 1957 study of A United Nations Peace Force, “Progress cannot be forced, but it can be helped to evolve. That which is radical one year can become conservative and accepted the next.” With wider support and solidarity, a UNEPS might yet be a ‘game-changer.’ In the words of the late Sir Brian Urquhart:

This venture is of the greatest importance both to the UN as a responsible institution and to the millions as of yet unknown, innocent victims who might, in the future, be saved by

this essential addition to the UN’s capacity to act on their behalf. There is one overwhelming argument for the United Nations Emergency Peace Service. It is desperately needed, and it is needed as soon as possible.

¹ The author most appreciates the generous help of Cynda Collins Arsenault who made all progress possible over the past two years. He is also very grateful for the wonderful inspiration of Johanne Touchette.

² See, H. Peter Langille, “Improving United Nations Capacity for Rapid Deployment,” New York: International Peace Institute, October 2014.

³ See, United Nations, An agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping : Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992 / Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Available:

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749?ln=en>

⁴ See, The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001. Available:

<https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/the-responsibility-to-protect-report-of-the-international-commission-on-intervention-and-state-sovereignty-2001/>

⁵ Sir Brian Urquhart, “Can the United Nations Adapt to the 21st Century?”, Address to Canadian Institute of International Affairs, King’s College, reprinted in *International Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Winter, 2004/2005), pp. 227-236 Available:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40204029>

⁶ Edith M Lederer, “Top UN official says UN not meeting goal to prevent wars”, Associated Press, May 10, 2016. Available:

<https://apnews.com/article/0a2c51e2896543b0be7788c46823ae3c>

⁷ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Global Census Poll 2021, Available: <https://ny.fes.de/article/global-census-poll>

⁸ Aside from its central role in coordinating multilateral cooperation to address shared global challenges, the UN retains unique relevance from the legitimacy conferred by its legally binding Charter

and universal membership, its sole capacity to authorize armed force and the span of UN engagement on global issues, including sustainable development, human rights, health, peace and security, disarmament, humanitarian relief, education, financing, work and women.

⁹ Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (2003), p. 287.

¹⁰ The core principles of the proposed UNEPS are partially derived from a review of related proposals since the 1950s, which helped to identify what wouldn't work, as well as what might. They are also a response to both the short-falls (gaps) and various shifts occurring in UN peace operations over the past thirty years. Hopefully, they reflect numerous lessons-learned since starting on the official study in 1994. The earlier work on 'common security', 'alternative security and defence' within the peace research field was especially helpful. And, this initiative benefitted from the considerable guidance shared by senior UN and national officials, as well as the insights provided by military, police and civilians engaged in peace operations and violent conflicts.

¹¹ The ideas were developed and refined in subsequent, independent work of H. Peter Langille (office of primary responsibility in the Canadian study) under the guidance and inspiration of the late Sir Brian Urquhart (co-chair of the study). The key documents and publications on the proposed United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) are available online at Sustainable Common Security. The research and development of the UNEPS proposal were neither affiliated with, nor supported by the Simons Foundation Canada, Professor Robert Johansen, nor from Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW).

¹² As noted, "Thus, a UNEPS would clearly be more reliable and rapid than the existing standby arrangements and standby partnerships with regional organizations, which require extensive negotiations, then national approval and national caveats stipulating terms of use before any contingents may be rented and deployed to a UN operation."

See, H. Peter Langille, *Developing A United Nations Emergency Peace Service: Meeting Our Responsibilities to Prevent and Protect*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 6.

¹³ A year-long, in-depth study of a 'standing UN force' was officially announced. Notably, that aspect was promptly sidelined by officials, who preferred pragmatic incremental reforms. These appeared more practical and feasible (easier to deliver), under less-than-favorable circumstances (e.g., Somalia syndrome, heavy failure in UNAMIR/Rwanda & Pres Clinton's PD-25, with cuts to the UN budget). The one big idea of a standing UN Emergency Group (the precursor to a UNES and UNEPS) was left only partially developed. Instead, the focus shifted to a UN Rapid Deployment Mission Headquarters (RDMHQ) of seven people, and to secure a compromise to develop the multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), with fourteen MS participating. Regrettably, the RDMHQ only lasted a year in DPKO before funds were cut and it was disbanded. The participating SHIRBRIG partners could not agree on much so, it never managed a deployment as a full brigade. Yet two participating Member States deployed what amounted to a battle-group in UNMISS. UN DPKO gave up on hopes of the SHIRBRIG being a rapid & reliable brigade within 3 years, but highly-valued the SHIRBRIG's HQ and planning element, which was very helpful in 3-to-4 UN operations until the SHIRBRIG was disbanded in 2009.

¹⁴ See, H. Peter Langille, *Bridging the Commitment – Capacity Gap: A Review of Existing Arrangements and Options for Enhancing UN Rapid Deployment*, (Center for UN Reform Education, New Jersey, 2002).

¹⁵ See, Justine Wang, A Symposium on Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity: The Challenge of Prevention and Enforcement, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament Studies, Santa Barbara, Dec.5-6, 2003. Available: <https://www.wagingpeace.org/a-symposium-on-genocide-and-crimes-against-humanity-the-challenge-of-prevention-and-enforcement/> David Krieger insisted on including 'peace' within the title. At this event, Professor Robert Johansen, Senior Fellow and Professor of Political Science at the Kroc Center at Notre Dame University, stated that "Langille's proposal was the most sophisticated to date." Within months, Johansen wrote on the proposal without reference to the source

and he would then take credit for developing the idea and be paid by the Ford Foundation for writing the proposal into a book.

¹⁶ See for example the various shifts within The Brahimi Report, United Nations, Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, A/55/305 S/2000/809 (August 21, 2000). Available: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a_55_305_e_brahimi_report.pdf

¹⁷As noted in the former Secretary-General's Comprehensive Review, "in practically all places of armed conflict, particularly in intra-state conflicts, the UN will be involved both in consolidating peace and security and in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance." Comprehensive Review, Para 270, p. 46.

¹⁸ See, H. Peter Langille, "Improving United Nations Capacity for Rapid Deployment," New York: International Peace Institute, October 2014.

¹⁹ As Canada's report acknowledged, "reliability is a central principle of rapid reaction. At present, there is no absolute assurance that nationally-based units will be immediately available at the behest of the UN. In 1995, the Secretary-General acknowledged, "a considerable efforts has been made to expand and refine stand-by arrangements but these provided no guarantee that troops will be provided for a specific operation. The problem of reliability in the supply of national units poses a significant obstacle to a rapid UN response to crisis." P. 60

²⁰ This study acknowledged that, "... a UN rapid reaction capability can be truly reliable only if it no longer depends on Member States of the UN for the supply of personnel for peace operations. If the UN is to build a rapid reaction capability, which is fully reliable, the challenge in the years ahead will be to develop its own personnel, independent of state authority." p.60

See, Government of Canada, *Towards A Rapid Reaction Capability For The United Nations*, (report submitted to the UN General Assembly, September, 1995), p. 62. Available: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/piquant/Langille/Towards+a+Rapid+Reaction+Capability+for+the+United+Nations.pdf>

²¹ UN Security Council resolution 1325 reaffirmed "the important role of women in the prevention and

resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security." See, UN Office of The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, "Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security", Available: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

The Three Legs of “The Never Again Triangle”

An Army of Humanity to Stop Crimes Against Humanity

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Executive Summary

1. This paper proposes that three major global governance innovations, working synergistically together, hold the potential to bring an end to genocide forever for all the members of our one family of humankind.
2. One of these is the International Criminal Court, created in 2002. Another is the Responsibility to Protect Principle, established in 2005. And the third remains to be born – a standing, directly-recruited, all-volunteer, rapid-reaction United Nations Peace Force.
3. Such a standing force, this paper argues, would solve in a stroke the two fundamental problems which so often lead to paralyzing international inaction in the face of unspeakable atrocities. First, even if individual citizens are highly motivated to volunteer to risk their lives to protect the innocent from such atrocities, there is no entity where they can offer their services to do so. Second, the national military forces which do exist, and which are quite capable of bringing an end to such atrocities, only do so when their governments happen to perceive a vital national interest in doing so.
4. The paper examines at various points five particular such cases of international failure – Somalia in

1993, Rwanda in 1994, Srebrenica in 1995, Boko Haram in 2014, Sudan in 2023, and Haiti in 2023. It argues that a UNPF could have made a decisive difference in all six cases. And it devotes a particular focus to the unique dilemmas, in these cases and others, facing the president of the United States, as commander-in-chief of the proverbial most powerful military in the world.

5. Finally, the paper argues that a UNPF can ensure that we mean what we say when we say “never again” – because it would be the only military force on the planet whose *raison d’etre* is not to protect the individual national interests of individual sovereign states, but the common human interest we all share in casting genocide forever onto the rubble heap of history.

Introduction

How might we create a world where our descendants will look at ethnic cleansing and genocide and crimes against humanity in the same way that we look at medieval torture chambers? How might we cast mass murder onto the rubble heap of history? How might we bring a sense of peace and security and safety into the minds and hearts of most of the living human beings who dwell in our global civilization? I began to discern the outlines of an answer to these questions in my conversations with a man named Harris Wofford.¹ Wofford had been a

United States senator from Pennsylvania. He was a bright young man working in the White House of President John F. Kennedy. And as a precocious college student at the University of Chicago in 1948, he wrote a remarkable pamphlet called *Road to the World Republic*.

It was in this work that Harris Wofford told the tale of one Duncan Cameron, an 18-year-old Englishman who refused induction into the British Army shortly after the end of the Second World War, “preferring prison rather than violence in support of national interests.” But Cameron was no pacifist. He declared instead “his determination never again to serve in the army of a nation-state, but his readiness to serve in a World Police Force to enforce world law.” So the Crown put him on trial for treason.ⁱⁱ The problem was, there was no world police force. There was not one then and there is not one now. Young Mr. Cameron wanted to volunteer, in the military realm, to serve something larger than the country where he happened to have been born. But there was no place for him to do so. Today, if anyone wants to serve in the armed forces, they can only serve in national armed forces. There is no entity where one can offer oneself to serve something larger. In the military realm, people can only volunteer to serve their country. No one cannot volunteer to serve humanity.

Three Legs of the Triangle

I argue that three separate and distinct global governance innovations can provide the foundation for bringing about the elimination of crimes against humanity from the human condition forever. Perhaps we

might call them, synthesized together, “The Never Again Triangle.” Two of the arms of this triangle have already been well and precisely drawn by the geometers. These two tremendously unappreciated transformations in the international arena have taken place in this century, and both were directed at the eradication of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. The third is what Duncan Cameron wanted to join: a United Nations Peace Force.

The first is the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was established by the Rome Statute on July 1, 2002 – largely through the dogged efforts of civil society activists during the 1990s [including me as a young activist with Citizens for Global Solutions and the World Federalist Movement]. The ICC, in essence, is a permanent Nuremberg Tribunal. But while Nuremberg applied only to one particular war (and only to the side that lost), the ICC aspires to bring to justice the perpetrators of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity anywhere, anytime, on into the indefinite future.

(Today, 123 of the UN’s 193 member states are parties to the ICC, with the ultimate goal of universal membership.) The overriding purpose of the ICC is not only to hold heinous international criminals to account, but to deter the commission of such crimes in the first place. The ICC conveys the idea that there now exist universal standards of conduct, larger than the laws of particular states, which apply not just to nations but to every individual on Earth. It puts every single member of the human race on notice:

If a country violates the universal standards of humanity, then humanity will eventually hold that entity to account.

Then three years later, in September of 2005, the UN World Summit marked the organization's 60th anniversary. It proclaimed a new principle of international law and UN practice – the *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P). R2P states that when national governments fail to “protect” their own citizens from things like ethnic cleansing—or when the government itself commits such atrocities—the rest of the international community has a “responsibility” to intervene with military force when necessary. This is in order both to bring such crimes to an end, and then ideally to arrest the perpetrators and deliver them either to relevant national courts or the ICC.

Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing, in her marvelous 2015 book *Building a World Federation*, points out how carefully the creators of the R2P principle crafted their terminology. The initiative arguably first arose in the Canadian government in 2001, when it appointed an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. Its mandate was to try to figure out what the international community ought to do about mass atrocities inside national borders when the government of that nation proved unwilling or unable to bring them to an end or was actively committing them itself.

Ma'ani Ewing notes that many were referring to what they had in mind as a right to intervene. However, the commission quickly realized that this carried strong

echoes of colonialism, suggesting some kind of new, official principle: A few rich and powerful nations would possess a “right” to directly intrude on the internal matters, and the national sovereignty, of the many poor and vulnerable states of the world. This, assuredly, was not the way forward.

Instead, the Outcome Document of the 2005 UN 60th anniversary World Summit stated that all nations held “a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.” That term suggested that while sovereign nations still held the first and primary responsibility for the safety and welfare of their national citizens, ultimately all human beings were world citizens, meaning that it was the world community as a whole which held the ultimate duty to safeguard them from grievous harm.ⁱⁱⁱ

If the ICC set forth universal standards of conduct that were expected from every human being, the R2P principle suggested that those standards might be accompanied by tangible mechanisms of world law enforcement. R2P empowers the military forces of sovereign states, UN member states, to enforce the prohibitions on mass atrocities set out in the ICC statute. But what happens when they do not? And what happens when citizens of those states want to volunteer to prevent such atrocities, but their governments will not?

Problem One: Individuals Can Only Volunteer to Serve Their Countries

Consider a more contemporary example that an individual might face similar to Duncan Cameron's example. In 2014, Boko Haram [translated as 'western education is forbidden'] kidnapped some 276 teenage Nigerian girls out of their boarding school dormitories in the middle of the night. Nigerian authorities proved unable to adequately respond. Who would?

In 2014, the US Navy advertised itself as "a global force for good." However, the military recruiting commercials that deployed that tagline conveyed a most profound mischaracterization. The US military is a *national* military force. It exists to protect American national security and American national interests. This is not to contend that the US military is somehow a 'global force for bad.' Instead, it is a global force for the good of *the United States*. In no way does it exist to serve as a global force for the good of the world.

In 2014, virtually no one in the United States would have argued that the education of girls anywhere on Earth should be 'forbidden.' Yet virtually no one in the United States even suggested that American armed forces, however skilled and brave and lethal, might have been dispatched to retrieve the kidnapped girls. It was a policy option that never even got placed on the table. Why not? Because the villains who comprise Boko Haram did not present a direct threat to America.

Nine years on from the brief heyday of the trending hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls, Boko Haram continues to thrive. Almost 100 of the original 276 teenage girls remain still in captivity. In Lagos, the French artist Prune Nourry created sculptures of many of them, for public display in the city's commercial center, in an effort to keep them from being abandoned and forgotten. Last year about a dozen of the girls were released or escaped. Every single one returned with at least one baby. It is widely believed that all of the girls still held are now "married" to one of their captors. It is also widely believed that not one has received anything like an education during their stolen decade.^{iv}

Yet today still, however willing an American might be to put their life on the line to put a stop to the ongoing barbarities of Boko Haram or any other threat, there is no place for them to volunteer to do so. In the military realm, our young generation can volunteer to serve America, but just like Duncan Cameron, they cannot volunteer to serve the world. And the same is true for every citizen of every other country in the world.

Problem Two: Nations Only Recruit Volunteers to Serve Their Own National Interest

There is rarely any shortage of violent conflicts inside one state which do directly engage the interests of outside states – leading to military intervention. This rarely leads to optimal outcomes for the citizens

inside those states. This is because the outside intervenors are not there to rescue those poor souls. They are there to pursue their own agendas. Syria might be the best of many contemporary examples. It is not hyperbole to assert that the main reason for the humanitarian catastrophe there since 2011 is the sharply divergent interests of outside actors like the United States, Russia, Turkey and Iran – all of which have deployed their own boots on the ground in Syria. It does not help matters that two of those four wield the veto at the UN Security Council.

There is equally no shortage of internal violent conflicts where the opposite strategic calculus prevails. UN member states have proven unwilling to put their own forces directly at risk — no matter how ghastly the atrocities — when the fight in question does not directly engage their own vital interests. The venerable global governance scholar/activists David Krieger of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Saul Mendlovitz of Rutgers Law School, and William Pace of the World Federalist Movement call this “the body bag backlash – the concern that if military personnel are killed during humanitarian interventions, the public will question or even condemn the exercise as being insufficiently important to national interests.”^v The catalogue of such cases wearies the soul. Even just since the Cold War’s end a third of a century ago, we have had Bosnia, four years of international abandonment in Sarajevo and Srebrenica before the 1995 Dayton Accords, Darfur, the Congo, the abuses of the Rohingya by the government of Myanmar, the violations of Boko Haram in West Africa, and the

barbarities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

It was not the UN that failed to prevent this seemingly endless litany of atrocities. It was the member states of the UN, the ones with the armies that could have acted but did not. “Blaming the UN for inaction,” said the legendary diplomat Richard Holbrooke,” is like blaming Madison Square Garden when the Knicks lose.”^{vi}

Rwanda serves as the quintessential, still unbearable example. On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana, a member of the country’s majority Hutu tribe, crashed at the Kigali airport. No one survived. Hutu extremists, without evidence, blamed the Tutsi minority – and used it as an excuse for settling old scores. Overnight, neighbor turned against neighbor, unleashing an orgy of bloodshed. A United Nations peacekeeping mission was actually already on the ground in Rwanda when the carnage began. Less than a year earlier, the UN Security Council had created the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), to help supervise a 1993 peace agreement which aimed to bring some stability to the country. However, when the violence commenced within hours after the plane crash, the roughly 2500 UNAMIR troops did not have any kind of a mandate from the UN Security Council to protect civilians. UNAMIR soldiers were only permitted to employ their weapons in self-defense. The commander of UNAMIR on the scene, the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, pleaded with his superiors in New York to persuade UN member states to send him more troops – and to provide him with the authority to use them to stop the rapidly

unfolding genocide. But the calculations in the capitals of those states were moving in the opposite direction. Hutu murderers captured and killed the Tutsi prime minister of the country – and then tortured and killed the ten Belgian soldiers who had been assigned to protect her.

So Belgium, and most of the countries who had earlier already contributed troops to UNAMIR, began to withdraw their forces. Incredibly, 15 days after the butchery began, the Security Council on April 21st voted to decrease the size of UNAMIR – from 2500 to 270. Three weeks after that, on May 15th, after much diplomatic handwringing, it reversed course, and increased the size of the mission to 5500.

This brings us to the moment of truth in the saga: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali pleaded with modern UN member states, every day, over and over again, to fulfill that 5500 authorization, and to send just a handful of well-equipped and well-trained troops from their modern armed forces. These almost certainly would have had the capacity to quickly establish safe corridors and safe havens, and to provide refuge for hundreds of thousands of innocents.

Indeed, for a brief time, such a safe area had in fact existed. Before the April 6th plane crash, Belgian soldiers had been quartered at a large school campus in a suburb outside Kigali. On April 7th, thousands of Tutsis made a beeline to the school, hoping that the Belgian soldiers would protect them. Before long Hutu mobs had surrounded the school.

But they did not make an effort to enter – surmising that the Belgians would have fired their weapons to defend themselves, and incidentally the Tutsis inside the school grounds as well. It was a standoff. The peacekeepers certainly were not venturing outside and engaging in combat to bring an end to the atrocities. They were effectively protecting the people inside, and probably, at least in sufficient numbers, they could have done so indefinitely. A *de facto* safe area. But before long, the word came down. The time had come for them to evacuate Europeans from the country and to evacuate themselves. So, the Belgian soldiers headed to the Kigali airport. Later, a Belgian colonel said that his young soldiers told him, with horror and dismay, that they could see the frothing mob in their rearview mirrors as they drove away.

Soon thereafter, that mob murdered virtually every Tutsi soul inside that school.

Most Americans were aghast, appalled, and sickened by the violence in Rwanda, reported well on the nightly television newscasts. If those Belgian soldiers were able to protect the thousands of Tutsis inside that school—for as long at least as they were willing to remain—certainly the mighty United States military could do far more. Unfortunately, no one could really make a case that the United States had any vital national interests in Rwanda. This was especially true since the events in Rwanda unfolded less than a year after an American military debacle in Somalia the previous October. There, about 120 elite US Army soldiers had descended on the capital, in an

effort to capture a group of the top lieutenants of a brutal Somali warlord. It was a mission that was supposed to take about an hour. Instead, a huge firefight ensued, two American Black Hawk helicopters were brought down, and 18 Americans were killed. Their bodies were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in front of jeering spectators – and the images were broadcast around the world.

And yet, traumatic as this was for the United States, and for the still-new administration of President Bill Clinton, it is difficult to conjecture that Washington would have reacted differently to Rwanda even if Somalia had never happened. Because despite the pleas of the UN Secretary-General, every other country in the world came to exactly the same conclusion. Not one nation discerned sufficient vital national interests of its own in Rwanda, to put its own daughters and sons at risk in Rwanda. After the May UNSC resolution, not one nation did.

And so, for 100 days during the spring of 1994, perhaps three quarters of a million innocent souls were brutalized, and tortured, and raped, and hacked to pieces alive in Rwanda with machetes. This happened while America and the world watched but failed to act. “I assure you that with 400 paratroopers, we could have stopped the genocide,” said Boutros-Ghali a few months later. “I have 20,000 trained men with the proper equipment who know exactly how to carry out peacekeeping operations. The problem is that on each occasion I have to secure the agreement of the various states to

put these troops at my disposal.”^{vii}

UNAMIR finally did reach its designated force level of 5500 troops on the ground in Rwanda ... in the fall of 1994. By that time, as Nikita Khrushchev said famously about a possible future atomic apocalypse, many of the survivors were envying the dead.

The Solution: A United Nations Peace Force

Fortunately, we have at hand a brilliant proposal which, in a stroke, can solve both problems simultaneously. It is a global governance innovation which has been promulgated, articulated, and elaborated virtually since the birth of the United Nations itself. What was needed then, what is needed now, and what will undoubtedly be needed again, is a standing, directly recruited, all-volunteer, rapid reaction *United Nations Peace Force* (UNPF). The purpose of such a force, its *raison d'être*, would not be to defend the national interests of any particular state, but the common human interest we all share in relegating genocide to the dustbin of history. That is why it would act, when UN member states now fail to act. It would be filled with expert soldiers from all over the world, well-equipped, extensively trained, and superbly led by experienced military officers. These would be individuals who explicitly volunteer to put their lives on the line not to defend their own countries, but to protect humanity from the kinds of atrocities we all can agree have no place in a civilized single human community.

A United Nations Peace Force will solve the problem of what to do when atrocities erupt in places where the interests of outside powers are not sufficiently engaged to intervene. And a United Nations Peace Force will solve the problem of what to do with the legions of individuals all around the world who are motivated to risk their lives to save innocents – and who couldn't care less about whether the interests of their own country are sufficiently engaged to intervene. Perhaps we might call these courageous women and men of the future 'world citizen soldiers.' To bring an end to crimes against humanity, the world needs an army of humanity.

I think the line to sign up will be very long indeed.

A well-conceptualized UNPF could do far more than just engage in military action. National military forces, which are designed to engage in combat with other military forces, are often not very good at stopping random violence committed by individuals and warlord-run gangs rather than armies. They are not trained to end clashes between loosely-organized armed groups, stop mass atrocities, protect and assist large groups of refugees, and bring order to chaos. But it is precisely these latter kinds of situations which our UNPF would be designed to confront. Our UNPF would contain traditional (but culturally informed) police forces, vital to maintaining order in the refugee camps and "safe areas" established by UNPF troops. And it would contain many other civilian specialists as well, such as medical personnel, experts in

the local legal complexities of getting people reunited with families, back into their homes, and back on their feet, and (mostly female) counselors to help begin to heal the traumas of the survivors of sexual violence, who are predominantly female. That last point is crucial in this context.

The sad reality is that for years traditional UN peacekeeping operations, which might be expected to be there to prevent rape as a weapon of war, have been plagued by the commission of such crimes by their own contributed national forces!^{viii} But a standing UNPF could prove far superior to the present system. Rather than hoping that each of the many individual nations contributing to a UN peacekeeping mission will have undertaken state-of-the-art training directed at preventing sexual violence by their military personnel, it will have one service, integrated and professional, where such training will be front and center from the outset. A zero-tolerance policy regarding such crimes by its own personnel will be paramount to the success of a UNPF. Where accusations of transgressions do occur, there will be one process, transparent and credible and consistent, for addressing any and all grievances – rather than having to deal with a multitude of national governments and judicial systems. Central to this approach will be to fully incorporate female civilians and military officers into all aspects of a UNPF's management, command, operations, and leadership.

The thorny question of who, which body, would possess the formal power to authorize the dispatch of a UNPF has been widely discussed in the many decades of literature

about the standing UN force idea. Three alternatives seem both most reasonable and most likely.

First, despite the many flaws in the structure and voting rules and track record of the UN Security Council, it nonetheless today is the only global entity with formal international legal authority to maintain global “peace and security.” It is therefore the obvious candidate to imbue with the official authority to deploy the UNPF. The Council could conduct an urgent, immediate, emergency debate about the part of the world in question, and then take a vote. If the vote is yes, the UNPF (unlike contemporary UN peacekeeping) will be ready, willing, and able to go.

Sometimes, however, as the international community has been wearily reminded over and over again during the past nearly eight decades now, the Security Council will find itself deadlocked through the great power veto. In that case, some kind of provision could be made for the UN General Assembly instead to formally authorize the rapid deployment of the UNPF.

The third alternative is not mutually exclusive from the other two. It is to place the authority to dispatch the UNPF into the hands of the UN secretary general (SG). This authority would likely not be open-ended and would be constrained by two fundamental elements. On the one hand, the kinds of circumstances in which the secretary general might make such a decision would be, as much as possible, defined in advance. And on the other hand,

the Security Council would maintain the power either to overrule the SG’s decision, or to vote to cancel and withdraw the mission at virtually any point after commencement.

The benefits of providing the SG with this power are obvious. It could be a vehicle for getting around the political deadlocks which have plagued the United Nations virtually since its founding in San Francisco in 1945. It could make the possibility of extremely rapid deployments extremely likely in the case of extreme emergencies – as situations descending into chaos often prove to be. And because the participants on the ground would be aware of this possibility, it might, just might, have a deterrent effect on the parties – and prevent the violence from ever erupting at all.

A remarkable list of luminaries has supported and elaborated the UNPF idea over the past seven decades. (And as we will see, a “United Nations Peace Force” is not the only possible name for this same essential concept.) In 1948, when the United Nations was not yet 3 years old, the UN’s first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, called in a speech at Harvard for the establishment of a “United Nations Legion.”^{ix} And this proposal was elaborately developed a decade later in William Frye’s seminal 1957 book, *A United Nations Peace Force*.

Then in the early 1990s, as international political thinkers began to contemplate both the possibilities of the brand new post-Cold War world and the UN’s upcoming 50th anniversary, a bit of a buzz began. One of

the first to speak out, rather surprisingly, was former U.S. President Ronald Reagan. In a remarkable speech at Oxford University on December 4th, 1992, he suggested that the UN needed to develop “a humanitarian velvet glove backed by a steel fist of military force.” The best vehicle for it to do so? “A standing UN force,” said Ronald Reagan, “an army of conscience that is fully equipped and prepared to carve out human sanctuaries through force if necessary.”^x

The proposal was next considerably elaborated by Sir Brian Urquhart, longtime UN Under-Secretary-General and arguably the world’s leading UN affairs observer for many years in retirement, in a landmark 1993 *New York Review* article, “For a UN Volunteer Military Force.” Kai Bird followed up in *The Nation* magazine in 1994 with “The Case for a UN Army.” [He is the Pulitzer-Prize winning coauthor of *American Prometheus*, which served as the basis for the 2023 summer blockbuster film *Oppenheimer*.] One of the central recommendations of the 1995 Commission on Global Governance, led by the sitting Prime Minister of Sweden Ingvar Carlsson, was the creation of “a highly trained UN Volunteer Force ... willing to take combat risks.”

The idea did not die after UN50. In 2001 Congressman James McGovern introduced a “U.N. Rapid Deployment Act,” co-sponsored by more than 50 members. (One of them was my former boss Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and I had something to do with getting him interested in that.) American foreign policy establishment heavyweights Morton Abramowitz and

Thomas Pickering revived the proposal again in a 2008 essay in *Foreign Affairs* magazine.^{xi} And the Canadian scholar H. Peter Langille, who for decades has pushed this idea arguably more intrepidly than anyone else in the world, published his tour de force book on the topic in 2015 called *Developing a United Nations Emergency Peace Service: Meeting Our Responsibilities to Prevent and Protect*.

Indeed, one can even find antecedents for the standing international force idea prior to WWII. In 1932 something called the “New Commonwealth Society” arose in Great Britain. Its main agenda was addressing the failures of the League of Nations – which would of course become much more evident later in the decade. Its main proposed remedy was an international police force to enforce the decisions of the League. The society’s president was none other than the conservative member of Parliament Winston Churchill.^{xii}

Many mistakenly believe the UN already possesses such a force – the UN Blue Helmets. However, UN peacekeeping Blue Helmet missions are constructed in every single case from the standing military forces of UN member states, following a request from the UN Security Council and UN Secretary-General. And as we have seen, when those calls go out from UNHQ, far too often no one picks up the phone on the other end of the line.

“Would you feel safe with a police department in your city,” asked Nuremberg prosecutor Ben Ferencz and Ken Keyes, Jr.

in their 1991 book *Planethood*, “that had no paid officers, but depended on volunteers to step forth whenever there was a murder?”^{xiii} Of course not. That is why UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan often observed, with unconcealed exasperation, that the UN is the only fire department in the world that cannot procure either firetrucks or firefighters until after the building, or the neighborhood, or the country, has already been set aflame.^{xiv} “We must establish a world rule of law,” said former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. “We have to realize that the world needs policemen who serve the interests of all mankind.”^{xv}

It is worth considering the UNPF idea from the unique perspective of the United States – which possesses the proverbial “most powerful military in the world.” Because when these sorts of awful conflagrations arise, the American president, holding the enormous capability of the American military, faces an excruciating dilemma. And again, Rwanda is the best example.

President Bill Clinton faced two options in Rwanda, and both of them were miserable. One was dispatching U.S. forces, and incurring at least a few, and maybe more than a few, inevitable American casualties. And since this was a faraway conflict that, again, however dreadful, had little impact upon the United States, the specter of “another Somalia” loomed large. The other option, which by all accounts the president chose with much agony, was doing nothing – while the nightmare continued to unfold before all of our very eyes.

In 2008, Strobe Talbott—heavyweight member of the foreign policy establishment, longtime Brookings Institution president, and #2 official in the State Department during most of the Clinton administration—wrote a marvelous book called *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation*. Talbott tells us in *The Great Experiment* that for Bill Clinton, Rwanda remained the itch he could not scratch. Years later, the two of them would be spending time together, talking about all manner of wholly unrelated matters, when “on several occasions” President Clinton would abruptly ask Talbott to “explain to me again why we blew it in Rwanda.” And then the former president, according to Talbott, would direct a volley of questions his way.

“Couldn’t we have gone in there and stopped the killing rather than dealing with it as a refugee crisis after the fact? Okay so we didn’t have our eye on the ball early enough. But once we knew what was going on, even if we came in late, couldn’t we have saved a lot of those people? And couldn’t we have shut down those damn radios that were stirring up all that hate and vengeance? And rather than just evacuating all the whites, couldn’t we have protected the people we were leaving behind?”^{xvi}

It is reassuring perhaps to know that the man in the arena has his regrets about that which was not done. Yes, unchallengeable United States military forces could indeed have “gone in there and stopped the killing,” could indeed have “saved a lot of those people,” could indeed have done more than

“just evacuating all the whites.” But the one man who had the power to order those actions, at the hour of criticality, did not in fact order those actions.

A UNPF, however, would free future American presidents from facing such an unbearable dilemma! In this way, we might say that the existence of a UNPF itself would quintessentially serve the interests of the United States. Because it would create a third option, beyond risking U.S. military casualties on the one hand or heartbreaking inaction on the other.

So, one can see now how a UNPF would provide the third leg of the “never again triangle.” It would provide that indispensable mechanism of enforcement when national governments are unwilling to do so. Think how much that would enhance the deterrent value of the first two legs, after potential perpetrators around the world begin to understand that intervention will indeed happen, that they cannot act with impunity.

So, the International Criminal Court, the Responsibility to Protect principle, and a hypothetical future United Nations Peace Force, are the three arms of the “never again triangle,” which together can someday bring an end to genocide forever. In every single place where the members of our one human family dwell, on our one and only planet, lonely and fragile and whole.

What If the World Had a United Nations Peace Force in 2023?

In April of this year, the Sudanese government essentially broke in two, and an open civil war commenced between two competing generals/warlords/brutal thugs vying to take charge of the country. As usual, ordinary Sudanese are the victims. As usual, widespread sexual violence is being employed as a tactic of combat operations. As usual, perhaps as many as 5 million of the country’s population of 46 million have been desperately trying to flee the country ever since. As usual, perhaps 20 million now perch perilously on the brink of starvation.

This time, however, the U.S. Army commandos did show up. Were they there to save Sudanese? Of course not. They were there to evacuate Americans. And they left millions of desperate citizens of Sudan to their fate. Several other nations undertook similar swoop in and swoop out military operations. What is the moral argument, exactly, for why some people get extracted from horrible situations like these while others do not – solely because of where they were born?

But once again, there hasn’t been a whiff of foreign policy debate about whether the mighty United States military might do more in Sudan. It is, once again, an option not even on the table in Washington. And at the end of August 2023, the *Washington Post* declared that the conflict “has no end in sight, as atrocities and abuses mount.”^{xvii}

And the case for the utility of a United

Nations Peace Force in Sudan, right now, seems unassailable. If it existed, could and should it have gone into the country and taken sides in the raging civil war? Almost certainly not. If it existed, could it alternatively have somehow brought an end to their fighting, and hammered out a deal between the two parties? Probably not in any kind of near term.

But might it have deployed immediately into Sudan, within just a couple of days of the country's descent into chaos and violence, and quickly established large, secure, and accessible safe areas and safe corridors? And might thousands of Sudanese thereby have chosen to flee to these districts, which we might call "United Nations Peace Zones" – rather than what we have seen in the past few months instead, so many Sudanese trying desperately and futilely to flee the country? Absolutely. In Sudan, this spring, a UN Peace Force could have saved many, many lives.

I wrote a piece 20 years ago exactly this autumn, in *Sojourners Magazine*, lamenting exactly the same policy choice in Liberia. The USS Kearsarge showed up off the coast – and for a brief moment gave hope to thousands of terrified Liberians in the midst of upheaval in their country. But the hope disappeared when their mission became clear. US Navy helicopters arrived on the scene, took aboard Americans, lifted off, and left Liberians to their fate.^{xviii}

The situation in Haiti in the autumn of 2023 is quite different from that in Sudan, but not wholly dissimilar. After the July 2021

assassination of President Jovenel Moise, the Haitian government has become weaker and weaker, and less and less able to perform the basic functions of a state over large areas of its territory – including in the urban environment of its capital, Port-Au-Prince. Much of the city and country has descended into lawlessness.

Consequently, and predictably, heavily-armed private gangs have become more and more prominent ... and violent. In October 2022, the Haitian government pleaded with outside countries for the deployment of foreign armed forces inside Haiti, to help it get a grip on the increasingly unchecked power of these gangs. At this writing, more than a year later, the government of Kenya is considering the request.

And on August 26th, 2023, while a group of peaceful protestors from a local church in the Port-Au-Prince suburb of Canaan marched to plead with the local leaders to put an end to their reign of terror, gang members responded by opening fire with assault rifles on the parishioners, killing or wounding many.^{xix} Sound like the kind of circumstance where a standing UNPF might have made a decisive difference – perhaps deploying within days of that October 2022 request?

Now it must be noted here that UN 'safe areas' do not have an unblemished record of success. Probably the most prominent case involves one of the most infamous episodes of the post-Cold War world: the Srebrenica massacres of more than 8300 men and boys throughout July 1995. Thousands of Bosnian

Muslims had taken refuge inside the town of Srebrenica, supposedly protected by 1000 United Nations peacekeepers from the Netherlands. First the Bosnian Serbs cut the city off for several weeks, attempting to achieve victory through the time-honored method of forced starvation. But eventually the Bosnian Serb leaders lost patience, and so their “soldiers” entered the city to take all the inhabitants away.

The Dutch peacekeepers did nothing to stop any of it. There are dozens of agonizing tales of Dutch UN soldiers standing idly by, while appalling atrocities took place directly in front of them. How could they not act when witnessing such barbarities? Arguably because there were not enough of them, and they genuinely feared for their own lives. Arguably because their mandate from UN headquarters regarding what to do in the case of such a direct confrontation was not clear enough. And arguably because the government of the Netherlands did not want hundreds of its soldiers coming home in

body bags after engaging in a bloody battle with evildoers who, however loathsome, did not directly threaten the Netherlands.

These problems, of course, are all solvable. With a UNPF, adequate numbers of soldiers could be dispatched – and, crucially, can be ready to be dispatched in very short order. With a UNPF, clear enough mandates could be provided to those soldiers, to be instructed and able and willing to take combat risks, to put a stop to crimes and to arrest the criminals. And most importantly, because this goes to the heart of the *raison d’etre* of a UNPF itself, with a UNPF it will not matter if the soldiers are from the Netherlands, or Nicaragua or Namibia or Nepal or New Zealand, and the vile acts of the moment do not directly concern the governments of the Netherlands, or Nicaragua or Namibia or Nepal or New Zealand. Because those soldiers would not be representing those governments. They will be serving on behalf of our one human race.

ⁱ I developed a very close relationship with Senator Wofford during the last seven years of his life, 2012-2019. I visited him several times a year during that time in his condominium in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Here is the tribute article that I wrote about him after he died.

<https://fpif.org/remembering-harris-wofford-who-dreamed-of-a-united-states-of-the-world/>

ⁱⁱ Harris Wofford, *Road to the World Republic*, Chicago: The Federalist Press, 1948, p. 62.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sovaída Ma’ani Ewing, *Building a World Federation: The Key to Resolving Our Global Crises*, Washington, DC: The Center for Peace and Global Governance, 2015, pp. 110-112.

^{iv} Associated Press, “Nigerian girls abducted in 2014 have not been forgotten,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 2022, p. A2.

^v Quoted in *A United Nations Emergency Peace*

Service, Robert C. Johansen, Editor, New York: World Federalist Movement, 2006, pp. 15-16.

^{vi} Quoted in Strobe Talbott, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008, p. 389.

^{vii} *Agence Press-France*, January 12, 1995, <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/UncertaintyPersistsAboutUNRoleBoutrosGhaliAFP12011995.pdf>

^{viii} This fine piece from the NGO Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/11/un-peacekeeping-has-sexual-abuse-problem>, is one of many exploring this pervasive problem.

^{ix} *A United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, Robert C. Johansen, Editor, New York: World Federalist Movement, 2006, p. 7.

^x Quoted in Strobe Talbott, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the*

Quest for a Global Nation, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008, p. 257-8.

^{xi} Morton Abramowitz and Thomas Pickering, “Making Intervention Work: Improving the UN’s Ability to Act,”

Foreign Affairs, September/October 2008.

^{xii} Joseph Preston Baratta, *The Politics of World Federation*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004, p. 75.

^{xiii} Benjamin B. Ferencz and Ken Keyes, Jr., *Planethood: The Key to Your Future*, Coos Bay, Oregon: Love Line Books, 1991, p. xviii.

^{xiv} *A United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, Robert C. Johansen, Editor, New York: World

Federalist Movement, 2006, p. 9.

^{xv} Quoted in Benjamin B. Ferencz and Ken Keyes, Jr., *Planethood: The Key to Your Future*, Coos Bay, Oregon: Love Line Books, 1991, p. 74.

^{xvi} Quoted in Strobe Talbott, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008, p. 298.

^{xvii} <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/08/30/sudan-civil-war-atrocities-abuse/>

^{xviii} <https://sojo.net/magazine/september-october-2003/rescuing-ourselves>

^{xix} Associated Press, “Gang in Haiti shoots marchers,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2023, p. A3.

International Responses and Solutions to Mass Atrocity

Challenges to Publics' Engagement

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Executive Summary

1. The adoption of bold atrocity-prevention initiatives, key among which is the establishment of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS), continues to face significant challenges at international forums.
2. Publics in dominant states can serve a major function in overcoming these challenges by pressing and/or encouraging their governments to support such proposals.
3. However, ordinary citizens have often been missing actors in the deliberation and formulation of national prevention policies.
4. Increased understanding of the obstacles to public engagement will help address these and better the odds for improved international action.

Introduction

Why don't publics in democratic states do more to challenge weak responses to foreign atrocities by their governments? Putting it more bluntly, why have we, the citizens, been allowing our leaders to get away with bystander behaviors, again and again? These important questions have received surprisingly little attention from scholars. A

substantial body of literature on responses (and non-responses) to mass violence does exist, but its main focus has been on intergovernmental processes. Little consideration has been paid to the fact that the positions of states are shaped initially domestically, before being negotiated and implemented (or not) by international or regional bodies.¹

To contribute to the discussion, I consider in this paper key dynamics in the formulation of democratic states' atrocity response policies, focusing on the role, significance, and obstacles to engagement of the American public in these processes. My analysis suggests that improved strategies of involving citizenries in national policymaking could help persuade states, and subsequently the UN, to advance bolder prevention policies. I highlight as key example the international community's ongoing reluctance to create a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) which, as my research and those of others suggest, is a direly missing instrument in the UN's atrocity prevention toolkit. Better understanding of the hindrances to more active engagement by elites and mass opinion in different states could assist in harnessing stronger support for the establishment of a UNEPS.

The Importance of a UNEPS

The idea of establishing a United Nations Emergency Peace Service, or UNEPS, has been at the center of a graduate course I've been teaching for ten years now at the

School of Social and Political Sciences, the University of Sydney. During the course, each student is assigned a UN member state and tasked with researching that country's likely position on the establishment of a UNEPS. Playing the role of official representatives of their allocated states, the students then deliberate, amend, and vote on a mock UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution for the creation of the service. Over the past decade, our research and practice-based learning provided my students and me with important insights into the UNEPS proposal, its strengths, weaknesses, implementation challenges, and possible ways to address them.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not, every class I have taught over the years ended up adopting the UNEPS initiative. Not a single class had discarded the idea, despite the commitment of the students to their official role-playing and their knowledge that the proposal was never brought before, let alone adopted by the real UN General Assembly.

To be sure, the benefits of a UNEPS for the prevention of mass atrocities are hard to pass over. They include (briefly):

1. Rapid deployment capabilities (72 hours from UNSC authorization, instead of months).
2. UN control AND command of UNEPS operations (in normal peacekeeping, command is retained by the respective troop contributing countries).

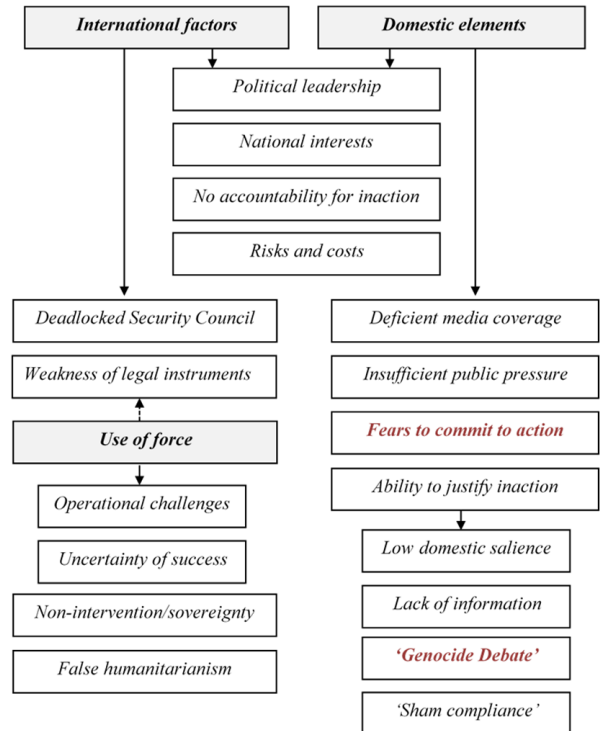
3. Global/cultural diversity of UNEPS personnel.
4. A broad, forward-looking scope of their expertise (military, police, civilians, all volunteers, recruited directly by the UN to address a wide range of challenges).
5. High-quality training, including on complex issues (e.g., cultural sensitivity, prevention of sexual abuse, etc.).
6. The ability to support existing peace operations under sudden pressure and more.

As can be appreciated, some of these features, if realized, could help resolve longtime vexing challenges for the UN, not only in the area of atrocity prevention but in peacekeeping also. Think, for example, of a UNEPS deployment within seventy-two hours into 1994 Rwanda, to support the critically overwhelmed peacekeeping mission of UNAMIR, or this year (2023) into Sudan, once the civil war broke out. As stated in two US House resolutions introduced in 2005 and again 2007: “a United Nations Emergency Peace Service capable of intervening in the early stages of a humanitarian crisis, could save millions of lives, billions of dollars...”ⁱⁱ There seems to be a major disconnect then between the expected benefits of a UNEPS and the challenges to its creation.

A key obstacle to the establishment of the service has been a longtime and still ongoing dithering at the UN (see Peter Langille’s contribution in this volume series). Arguably, one of the ways to overcome this institutional challenge could be found at the national level, since, as suggested earlier, the adoption of important UN reforms is often contingent on powerful states’ positions, which are formulated domestically first, before being negotiated transnationally.

Constraints on Governments’ Atrocity Prevention Policies

To begin unpacking the policymaking dynamics, it is useful to look initially at general constraints to states’ actions. My work has pointed to an array of recurring factors, internal and external, which have shaped, enabled, or restricted US responses to genocide and other atrocity crimes.



1.1. Recurring factors in states responses to mass atrocities.¹

¹ Eyal Mayroz. (2020) *Reluctant Interveners: America’s Failed Responses to Genocide from Bosnia to Darfur*. Rutgers University Press, pp. 8-9. Some clarifications to the schema:

- **National interests:** potentially clashing concerns and/or interests our governments continually juggle.
- **Risks and Costs:** perennially lacking resources and/or perceived high risks/costs of strong actions, including fears of having to pay a political price for failures (compared to lower assessments of the potential political gains of success).
- **Deadlocked Security Council/Weakness of legal instruments:** international level obstacles: e.g., the UN Security Council veto system, which allows any one of its five permanent members (P5) to block Council resolutions, including in response to mass atrocities, and other weaknesses of international law, or the global collective security system.

Indeed, as seen in the schema, recurring constraints to action had manifested both domestically, in foreign policymaking, and internationally. Two additional (and mutually reinforcing) dynamics to include in the list are: 1) habitual denials early in events, of the potentially detrimental consequences of failures to act;ⁱⁱⁱ 2) wishful thinking that ‘things would sort themselves out without, or with only little outside assistance.’^{iv}

When these challenges are looked at collectively, it is easy to see how the political deck has been consistently stacked against, rather than in favor of strong preventative actions, national or international. Notably, the odds for effective responses have been particularly low in regions of the world where one or more of the UN Security Council’s permanent members (P5) had no significant interests to intervene, or where protecting their interests dictated obstructing international responses (e.g., in Darfur Sudan, or during the Syrian civil war).

Challenges to Public Engagement

Research is yet to systematize the study of publics’ engagement with national policy making on faraway atrocities. As observed already, dominant states’ policies that help determine international action (or inaction) are being shaped not at the UN Headquarters in New York or in Geneva but domestically. Better understanding of the challenges and competing interests, but also opportunities for more robust action, could therefore help

formulate more effective national policies prior to the negotiation of multilateral responses.

The ability of the citizenry to influence a state’s response to mass atrocities was proposed back in 1994, in the context of the Rwandan genocide. *Make more noise* suggested then US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake to staffs from the NGO Human Rights Watch who wanted to know how to affect a more proactive American reaction to the ongoing genocide.^v That “noise” did not materialize, and the US, together with the rest of the world, stood by as hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were hacked to death in what became the fastest genocide of the twentieth century. Urgent appeals by the UN to its member states to help stop the genocide did little to change policy responses, and consequently, the tragic outcomes.^{vi}

US focused studies have identified different inhibitors to citizens’ engagement with distant atrocities. These included individuals’ preoccupation with their everyday life’s challenges; not knowing what to do, or how successful their efforts could be; prioritization of security and economic interests over humanitarian concerns; low identification and hence little empathy for the suffering of “distant others;” absence of political leadership to galvanize public dissent to morally “thin” policies; flawed media coverage; compassion fatigue; concerns over mission failures; and reluctance to bear projected costs or risks (particularly in relation to

military interventions) for humanitarian outcomes.^{vii} In America, foreign man-made humanitarian crises rarely became salient enough to affect domestic politics in meaningful ways. Low priority for the public of these situations, well understood by US policymakers, resulted often in insufficient action.

Managing the Public – Purposeful Framing of Information

How do governments reduce the political risks and costs of ignoring distant atrocities? Much of what we know comes, again, from US focused studies. Based on the findings, American policymakers tended to use combinations of half measure actions and deliberate framing of information they released to the public, mostly through the media, to manage the citizenry.^{viii}

My research has shown that US presidents and other high-ranking administration officials, Republicans *and* Democrats, sought to legitimate their policies by framing facts and other information in such purposeful ways. Frames were employed to set public agendas (emphasize or de-emphasize foreign crises by increasing or decreasing their visibility); push particular interpretations of events (i.e., ‘conflict’, ‘civil war’, ‘tragedy’, ‘genocide’, ‘ethnic cleansing’, etc.); control discussions of alternative policy options (highlight desirable policies, and ignore or challenge unwanted ones); assign blame for inaction to other actors; or encourage public sense of inability to make a difference.^{ix} There would

have been nothing wrong in these efforts, except that many of the policies enacted by US administrations proved indifferent, acquiescent, or in some cases complicit in the commission of mass atrocities.

Arguably, the relative ease with which administrations were able to contain electoral fallouts increases the probability that in many situations the US public was, by and large, at least *okay* with being managed. Americans did want their leaders to help stop mass atrocities; but when presented with information alleging significant risks and/or costs of strong action, or low chances of success, many considered these a high price to pay to save non-Americans. This hesitancy applied mostly to debates over humanitarian interventions, but also in relation to preventive action, or measures short of full-scale military response.

The Significance of Empathy

Another factor worth paying attention to are the effects of empathy. The partial data we have, together with rational conjectures, make it likely to assume that significant portions of the world’s population would support, at least in principle, stronger international efforts to prevent or stop mass killings of innocents. Hence, international advocacy on atrocity prevention has been focusing much of its message on appeals to public empathy.

The word ‘empathy’ conveys notions of kindness, sympathy, caring and compassion

and can lead, no doubt, to many positive outcomes. Its awakening and effects, however, are constrained often by different factors. For example, while empathy can surge swiftly and powerfully, it tends to subside as quickly. This trait makes it risky to depend on it as the main driver behind sustained advocacy campaigns.

Empathy as a term is used also by psychologists to communicate the experience of putting ourselves in someone else's shoes, and in our context, of feeling someone else's pain. Neuroscientific studies have shown that when we see, hear, or read about the suffering of others, the same parts of the brain which fire up when we ourselves experience physical or emotional pain, get triggered in similar ways.^x The experience of empathy involves therefore a form of suffering, which most people would not wish to feel, certainly not for prolonged periods.

The strongest empathy generated by the human mind is for a single person.^{xi} In experiments conducted, of motivations behind charitable donations, donors were more inclined to assist one faraway victim than two, and two victims more than four. By the time the number of victims reaches thousands or more, their stories become statistics. High numbers of casualties can capture the attention of governments and the media but seem to have a numbing effect on the public.^{xii} This inverse gap has proven difficult to close.

Important insights were gained also by studying differences in donors' attitudes

between natural disasters and human-caused atrocities. Persistent preferences to support the former over the latter reflected assumptions made by the donors about the blameworthiness of victims.^{xiii} That is, in contrast with the 'perfectly blameless' image of natural disaster victims, the complexities inherent in violent conflicts raised questions, particularly among uninformed donors, about possible culpability of the victims in the violence. Significant may also have been the sense that while donations directly respond to the needs of natural disaster victims, they cannot address the underlying causes of mass violence in any significant way.

Identification to Empathy

Identification with victims of atrocities can be a powerful generator of empathy, but its strength depends, once again, on a variety of factors: physical and/or emotional proximity; religious, ethnic, or cultural similarities; shared outgroup (or in-group), and more.^{xiv} The absence or the weakness of these influences are likely to reduce therefore our level of identification and in turn, the intensity of the empathy we experience.

I became interested in the role of identification during a 2010 visit to the Washington D.C. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Commencing with the Darfur display, I found it empty. A quiet day, I surmised, but continuing to the Holocaust exhibition, it was full of visitors. A seasoned African American guide of the USHMM

helped shed light on my experience. Americans, he told me, including African Americans, find it easier to identify with European Jews of the 1940s than with the Darfuris of 2004. The Jews, even in those days, had dressed more similarly to Americans nowadays, lived in houses more like American houses, and spent their time doing things more akin to Americans.^{xv} One conundrum of empathy, therefore, is that populations at the highest risk of atrocities, and hence, in the greatest need of the positive effects of empathy, are often those that we, in the West, are the least likely to identify with.

What to Do?

Preventive measures constitute the most beneficial responses to mass atrocities. If effective, they remove the need for more costly or risky interventionist actions. Despite this clear rationale, difficulties in attracting media, public, and policymakers' attention to threatened but not yet occurring situations of violence have resulted too often in insufficient political will to invest meaningfully in prevention. Prior to the breakout of violence, media interest in such situations tended to be low, at best, and public empathy lower still.^{xvi}

More systematic research is required into the knowledge gaps left open in relation to citizens' roles in the crafting of atrocity prevention policies. Un-answered or under-studied questions include the dynamics that led publics (and other domestic actors) to acquiesce to governments' bystander

policies, and into governments' failures (genuine or deliberate) to heed NGOs' early warnings and policy advice ahead of crises. The significance of the absence (or existence) of political ethical leadership in the area of atrocity prevention, at both national and international levels, should also be studied in much greater depth. Addressing such questions could contribute to our understanding of the circumstances under which publics' engagement could positively influence responses to foreign atrocities.

Importantly, government officials' readings of the policy views of their constituents do not need to be accurate to inform their decisions. Analyzing their conceptions of public attitudes is therefore more helpful for our understanding of the influence of the public than trying to determine what the public actually thinks.

Finally, while the proposal to establish a UNEPS is but one policy initiative among many others, it is an important one to pursue. After decades of failures, better informed publics and media involvement could have positive effects on states' policies, and subsequently on the decision-making processes at the UN. Public advocacy should set therefore clear achievable goals and provide clear explanations on how the creation of the service could help address current atrocity prevention challenges, and why and how the public could assist in the effort.

ⁱ Eyal Mayroz. *Reluctant Interveners: America's Failed Responses to Genocide from Bosnia to Darfur.*

Ithaca, NY: Rutgers University Press,
2020. <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978807075>.

ⁱⁱ 180. U.S. Congress, H. Res., *Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that a United Nations Emergency Peace Service capable of intervening in the early stages of a humanitarian crisis could save millions of lives, billions of dollars, and is in the interests of the United States.*, 109th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House March 17, 2005, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-109hres180ih/html/BILLS-109hres180ih.htm>; see also 213. U.S. Congress, H. Res., 110th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House March 5, 2007, <https://www.congress.gov/110/bills/hres/213/BILLS-110hres213ih.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Stanley Cohen. 2001. *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge UK Malden MA: Polity; Blackwell.

^{iv} Mayroz, Reluctant Interveners. 123.

^v Samantha Power. 2002. *“A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide*. London: Flamingo.

^{vi} Linda Melvern. 2009. *A people betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. London: Zed Books.

^{vii} Mayroz, Reluctant Interveners. 73.

^{viii} Eyal Mayroz, “Between Empathy and Fear: Recalibrating Incentives for Atrocity Prevention,” in *“Last Lectures”: The Prevention/Intervention of Genocide*, ed. Samuel Totten (London: Routledge, 2018), 38.

^{ix} Mayroz, Reluctant Interveners. 8.

^x Chad Luke. 2016. *Neuroscience for Counselors and Therapists: Integrating the Sciences of Mind and Brain*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

^{xi} Paul Bloom. 2016. *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion* First ed. New York NY: Ecco an imprint of HarperCollins.

^{xii} Paul Slovic, “‘If I look at the Mass I Will Never Act’: Psychic Numbing and Genocide,” *Judgment and Decision Making* 2, no. 2 (2007): 79–95.

^{xiii} Hanna Zagefka and Trevor James, ‘Psychology of Charitable Donations to Disaster Victims and Beyond’, *Social Issues and Policy Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2015, pp. 155-192.

^{xiv} Zagefka and James, “Psychology of Charitable Donations”.

^{xv} In Mayroz, “Between Empathy and Fear”. 36.

^{xvi} Eyal Mayroz, “Our failed response to genocide: Why states and citizens don’t do more to prevent mass atrocities.” *ABC Religion and Ethics*, January 5, 2021.

Early Warning and Early Action: *When Early is Too Late*

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Executive Summary

1. While a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) could be a valuable tool for conflict prevention and peacemaking, there are serious barriers that must be overcome.
2. Barriers related to approval, early warning, and rapid authorization need to be addressed in order for a UNEPS to be as effective as possible.
3. Overall, however, a UNEPS would be better than the status quo and if used effectively it could prevent and stop genocide.

Introduction

Peacekeeping works, at least with respect to limiting violence.¹ Although success varies across operations, there is a strong scholarly and policymaking consensus that peacekeeping operations lower battlefield deaths among disputants, limit civilian casualties, and deter or prevent human rights abuses.² In addition, such success in these elements is a virtual necessary condition for progress in a series of other peacebuilding missions including election supervision, promoting the rule of law, and more.³

The positive effects of peacekeeping occur *following* the deployment of troops. Accordingly, various proposals have been developed for some kind of United Nations force, whether it has been labeled as United

Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) or some moniker dealing with rapid reaction or rapid deployment.⁴ Common to all these proposals is a permanent military or civilian force that could be deployed quickly and ideally more frequently than conventional peacekeeping operations. For the purposes of this essay, I will use the term *emergency force* or the acronym UNEPS for these ideas, recognizing that there are some differences among them. The success of peacekeepers limiting violence is *prima facie* evidence of the prospective benefits from an emergency force, albeit that such success is correlated with force size and initial benefits would be smaller than for a fully staffed peace operation.⁵

This essay takes a different look at proposals for a UN emergency force, away from concerns with the organization, mechanics of deployment, and immediate effectiveness. Rather, I take a step back from those issues and consider the time frame *prior* to sending troops into the field. In doing so, there are additional hurdles that mitigate prospective benefits from such a force, even as its positive impacts are clearly suggested by the empirical record. These fall under three areas: approval, early warning, and rapid authorization.

Approval

Let us assume that a UNEPS or an emergency force is in place, no small feat in and of itself. An obvious impediment to saving lives by such a peace force, however, is actually deploying that force to a given

conflict. Under present rules and procedures, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is charged with responding to threats to international peace and security. That body must determine that such a threat exists *and* approve a peace operation, including any new emergency peace force. That is, the conflict must first appear on the UNSC agenda for discussion, albeit that informal discussions among members usually precede formal public debate. This is far from assured for any conflict, as various factors, including the interests and affinity of the permanent five members (the P5: USA, UK, France, Russia, and China) affect UNSC agenda setting.⁶ Then, the UNSC needs to muster consensus to authorize a new operation, including the specific mandate for the operations, the troop strength, and any other components. For approval, there must be nine of 15 affirmative votes, and the absence of a veto by any of the P5 members.

How likely is it that such consensus would be present to approve the deployment of a UNEPS? Some insights might be gained by reference to patterns of approval for more conventional peacekeeping operations in the past. In the immediate post-Cold War period (roughly beginning 1991 and lasting for up to a decade thereafter), there was an explosion of new peacekeeping operations approved by the UNSC, and the number of roles and tasks multiplied as well as peacekeepers supervised elections and assumed other peacebuilding roles. This was also a period of greater cooperation between the US, Russia, and China.

More recently, there are grounds for pessimism. Other than a brief follow-up operation in Haiti (2017-2019), there has not been a new peace operation authorized since 2014. The increasing hostility between veto-holding members United States, China, and Russia has been among the factors preventing any new peace operations. This would seem to rule out approving an emergency force deployment in the Middle East or in part of Asia (e.g., Myanmar), if not other areas as well. Thus, a UN emergency runs the risk of being a standing force that is never used or used infrequently.

In the next two sections, I leave this important concern aside, and instead focus on *when* the emergency force might be deployed rather than *if* it would be employed. That is, let us assume that the force will be sent to conflicts in need of stopping or preventing further violence. Even with that assumption, there are limitations and unintended consequences that might undermine its overall impact. The relevant considerations deal with early warning and rapid authorization.

Early Warning

The benefits from an emergency force accrue after deployment, and therefore maximizing those benefits requires that UN troops hit the ground as early as possible in a conflict. Ideally, analysts know that violence is imminent in a given country, and the UN emergency force arrives before death and destruction occur. This not only saves lives but makes conflict management

and resolution easier in that disputant positions and attitudes are not hardened as a result of violent confrontations. At minimum, deployment should take place early in the fighting even if preventive deployment might be impossible. This presumes the existence of an early warning system that provides the basis for such action.

If early deployment, prior to the onset of violence, is optimal, how does that correspond to the temporal patterns of UN decision-making and the authorization of peace operations? UN peacekeepers go to the most serious conflicts⁷ – that is, those conflicts with the most deaths and the greatest risks of negative externalities, including the spread of violence and refugees across borders. On the one hand, this is desirable in that the most dangerous conflicts are ones that receive UN attention and action. Yet looked at another way, the conclusions are more sanguine. UN peacekeepers are primarily sent to conflicts that have already seen violence and escalated such that death and destruction has reached unacceptable levels. Indeed, UN authorization frequently occurs as part of a peace agreement that ends a civil war; the peacekeepers are assigned duties to facilitate disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants as well as provide guarantees for the implementation of such agreements. Again, this is desirable, but it leaves a legacy of death, displacement, and destruction.

Proposals for a UN emergency force often use the term ‘fire brigade’ as an analogy.

Extending this analogy, UN practice is such that firefighters observe the initial flames of a fire but wait until a house is engulfed before deciding to take action. Even then, the brigade carries out activities that douse the remaining embers and prevent reignition, albeit with the part of the house destroyed and its residents left homeless.

Peacebuilding efforts are then devoted to the long and difficult processes of rebuilding the structures and repatriating the residents.

Another analogy would be a doctor not treating a patient with early stages of cancer until it has reached stage four status. In both examples, such delays would be considered professional malfeasance. For the United Nations, however, it is established practice.

The United Nations, as with many organizations, is crisis driven, acting only when problems become very costly. This is the opposite of an early warning approach. Better would be the deployment of UN forces before the fire gets out of control and before civilians and combatants are killed. In the history of UN peacekeeping, only one operation has been approved with a so-called preventive deployment mission. The United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) was sent to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1995 before hostilities broke out there. Nevertheless, this is an imperfect example of such action. It was deployed to prevent the spread of an existing war (the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina) rather than to prevent a war; it also was deployed late in the game, several years after that war began.

The timing of UN peacekeeping authorization is suboptimal. Does the UN have the capacity to anticipate violent conflict and take preventive action? There are various international capacities for forecasting events. Most well-known are perhaps those related to weather. Meteorologists around the world regularly predict weather events, with special attention to extreme ones. There is a collective international effort that created a tsunami warning system in which sensors pick up disturbances that, with various likelihoods, augur a catastrophic tidal wave. There are also forecasting models related to droughts and other natural phenomena. Climate change and population growth models include predictions, under various scenarios and assumptions, for decades into the future. Common to all these is that accuracy declines further in time from the present. That is, it is easier (although still probabilistic and therefore far from certain) to predict whether it will rain tomorrow than a particular day next week, much less a given day next month. There are many intervening variables that affect the possible outcomes.

Forecasting violent conflict, a prerequisite for early deployment, suffers from some of the same limitations and more. First, predicting when two states will fight or when a state will experience civil war is not as well developed as for the weather. It is not difficult to identify pairs of states who are “at risk” for militarized confrontations. Rival states—India-Pakistan or Israel-Iran—are well-known and likely suspects for violence or war. Nevertheless, understanding

precisely when war might occur is more difficult. Indeed, with few exceptions, such rivals are not at war at any given time; for example, India and Pakistan have had only four wars in more than 75 years since their independence. Is it realistic to send an emergency force there when war is the exception rather than the rule?⁸ Similarly, one could also determine which states have characteristics most associated with civil war, ethnic conflict, or genocide. Yet precise predictions of timing are difficult. The best assessments can be made just prior to the outbreak of violence or in the early stages of escalation, but that might be too late and in any case leaves space only for immediate Security Council action.

At present, the UN does not have a unit or a systematic method for early warning of conflicts, although there are nascent efforts with respect to human rights abuses.⁹ It does have desk officers that monitor countries around the world, but this is not the same as a dedicated effort at violence prediction. Indeed, UN members are likely reluctant to allow the UN Secretariat to have an independent early warning capacity. No state wants to be called a prospective failed state, accused of potential genocide, or even labelled ‘at risk.’ Even if the assessment is based on objective criteria, there will be claims of bias or partisanship. Would host state consent, a traditional pillar of peacekeeping, still be required for the emergency force? If so, it seems unlikely to be granted in the context of an early warning deployment.

If an early warning determination is made but no peace operation sent and widespread violence does not occur, critics will attack the system as flawed. There are likely to be such ‘false positives’ in assessments, and this would undermine confidence in the early warning system as well as any emergency force. If the emergency force is deployed prior to the onset of violence and none takes place, there will still be questions about whether the operation was necessary; credit for the absence of violence might not be given to the force. Furthermore, when peacekeepers are deployed during active fighting the end point for a peace operation can be clear – the end of the fighting and implementation of a peace agreement. It is less clear when an emergency force should be withdrawn in the case of a preventive deployment. There will be pressure from the host state and others to withdraw, perhaps prematurely.

A UNEPS force would work best before a conflict escalated to high levels of violence. The limited early warning capacity of the UN and political reluctance to take early action complicate the ability to authorize an emergency force as early as might be desired. Nevertheless, the UN Security Council does address conflicts when they cross a certain severity threshold, but getting on the agenda doesn’t mean that a peace operation is immediately authorized, and this has some unintended consequences as detailed in the next section.

Rapid Authorization

The placement of threats to international peace and security on the Security Council agenda, through early warning or other processes, does not mean that a peace force would be immediately authorized. There are a number of actions by the Council that might precede sending in a peacekeeping force. That interim period, between initial UNSC action and peacekeeping authorization and deployment, provides an opportunity for disputants to adapt strategically to the prospective of a peacekeeping force, whether a UNEPS or a traditional operation.

We can assume that a given conflict has been put on the UNSC agenda. Nevertheless, appearing on the public agenda of the Council is only the first stage in authorizing an emergency peace force. The UNSC indicates serious attention to a threat to international peace and security by passing an initial resolution or series of resolutions; the first step is not passing a resolution to deploy a peace operation. The initial resolutions can take multiple forms and have occurred in one out of three civil conflicts in the post-Cold War era.¹⁰ At the most basic level and reflecting the difficulty of obtaining consensus among UNSC members, the resolution might express concern over a given situation. If substantial violence is already underway, the UNSC resolution might call for a cease-fire and urge disputants to resolve their disagreements peacefully. As a conflict escalates, UNSC resolutions might single out one side or the other (e.g., government

or rebels)—or both—for criticism, especially in the face of atrocities. Thus, even with early warning in place or early action by the UNSC, the first efforts are not to employ a peace operation.

Beyond missing an opportunity to prevent or stop killing, what are the effects of those initial resolutions? My colleagues and I have studied this question and have discovered that initial resolutions have a pernicious effect on the conflict and the delay in authorizing a peace operation can actually make the situation worse.¹¹ Below, I summarize the findings of this study, and in the conclusion discuss the implications for the effectiveness of an emergency peace force.

An initial UNSC resolution concerning a given conflict is an important achievement for two reasons. First, it indicates that the UNSC has recognized a threat to international peace and security, a prerequisite for any further action. Second, a resolution also indicates that there was at least minimal consensus among the P5 and other UNSC members on the conflict, if only to express concern – that the resolution passed without a veto and with at least nine affirmative votes is evidence for this. The initial resolution also signals something else – a peacekeeping operation is forthcoming, even as the initial resolution(s) do(es) not yet authorize one.

Table 1: UNSC Resolutions and Civil Conflicts

		Prior UNSC Resolution		
		Yes	No	Total
UN PKO Deployed	Yes	25 (78%)	1 (1%)	26
	No	7 (22%)	100 (99%)	107
	Total	32	101	133

Source: Kathman, Benson, and Diehl (2023)

We examined all civil conflicts in the world from 1989-2014 and associated UN Security Council resolutions. We also examined whether the UNSC subsequently authorized a peacekeeping operation for that conflict. Table one from the study reports those results. Two aspects are notable for our purposes. First, in only one instance among the 26 peace operations authorized was there not a prior UNSC resolution dealing with the conflict;¹² note that the prior resolution was not the one approving the peace operation. Thus, prior resolutions were virtually a necessary condition for peacekeeping authorization. This suggests that even with early warning or reaching the UNSC agenda in the initial stages of conflict, any peace force—emergency or otherwise—is not likely to be authorized immediately. The UNSC will attempt other actions, often in the form of persuasion and diplomacy, before choosing the peacekeeping option.

Second, the passage of an initial resolution is a strong signal that a peacekeeping

operation is forthcoming, even if not imminently or in the months ahead. Of the 32 conflicts that were the subject of UNSC resolutions, 78% (26) were followed by a peace operation. Although not completely assured, when the UNSC passes a resolution about a conflict, there is a strong likelihood that a UN operation will be coming. Do the disputants in these conflicts recognize this and do they adopt strategies in light of this knowledge?

My colleagues and I have argued that conflict parties are well aware of UN resolutions and their signals of impending peacekeeping deployment. Most obvious is that state governments are aware of UN resolutions, given that they are members of the organization. They would be particularly cognizant of the resolutions that deal directly with conflict in their own state and/or that involve that state in some way; indeed, they might have been invited participants in the UNSC debates. Perhaps less apparent is the awareness of non-actors (e.g., rebel groups) of UN resolutions and processes. Past research has made it clear that such actors are aware of and sensitive to the UN and international standards in war. Specifically, many have political wings that monitor and consult with other actors, as well as interact with the UN itself. Non-state actors also learn about UN actions through media and other channels, especially if they are mentioned in UN resolutions. The bottom line is that governments and rebels are each aware when their conflicts are the subject of UN resolutions, and they have a reasonable expectation that a peacekeeping force will arrive at some point in the future.

What do conflict parties do with the knowledge that a peacekeeping operation is on the horizon? Our study demonstrated that the government and rebels *increased* the killing of civilians in the period between the passage of the initial resolution and the deployment of a peace operation. The effect was almost instantaneous, with 35 more deaths on average in the month immediately after the passage of the first resolution concerning the conflict. The impact was persistent over time, with no decay effect and relatively robust even as other resolutions about the conflict were adopted (or not). Perhaps a silver lining was that there was no evidence that battle-related fatalities in the civil conflict increased during the interregnum period.

What accounts for this deleterious effect? Combatants know that once peacekeeping forces are in place, the opportunities for violent actions will be limited; recall that evidence is strongly in favor of peacekeeping effectiveness and presumably for an emergency force as well. Undertaking violent actions before the operation is in place might be the last chance for them before the force arrives. Killing civilians achieves some short-term goals. First, it might allow combatants to seize additional territory (e.g., taking over villages) before a cease-fire or peace enforcement freezes the status quo and the bargaining positions of the disputants. Disputants might also use violence to consolidate any territorial control that has already been achieved. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to punish the supporters of opponents. Killing civilians is a unilateral

act with outcomes almost exclusively in control of the perpetrators. Benefits can also be achieved in the short-term. In contrast, engaging opposing forces militarily is more costly, and the results are uncertain and not ones that are easily achieved in the near term; for these reasons, battlefield deaths are not associated with an impending peace operation whereas civilian fatalities are.

Unless a peacekeeping force—whether an emergency or traditional one—is deployed immediately upon UNSC consideration of a conflict, the disputants will strategically increase their violence strategies in advance of force deployment. A UNEPS operation would likely limit killing after deployment, but unintentionally increase it prior to its arrival.

Implications

The prospective benefits of a UN emergency force are great. Yet these are likely to be diminished based on the three limitations discussed above. First, peace operations need to be authorized by the United Nations Security Council, and there is the significant risk that political divisions between the major power states, and with other members, will prevent the consensus needed to approve any operation. Thus, the existence of a peace force is insufficient if it stands idly by, waiting for an order to deploy. This limitation might be insurmountable in some instances; retrospectively, an authorization for an emergency force would have been impossible in the early days of the Syrian

civil war as well as prior to and during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

There are two possible paths to get around UNSC reluctance. One is laying the groundwork for the emergency force well in advance of any deployment. This means getting acceptance from P5 states to the concept and creation of the force. Early successes in less controversial conflicts might build support for the force and ease the way for further deployment in more complicated and contentious conflicts. Another pathway would be to remove the authority of the UNSC to approve the use of the emergency force, perhaps granting the UN Secretariat the power to send forces as needed. That would solve the problem of UNSC stalemates, but it is not realistic to expect that UN members would be willing to allow others such autonomy.

A second implication concerns the desirability of early warning for conflict prediction, and therefore early deployment for an emergency force. If one thinks of conflicts as developing along an “escalation curve” from onset to maximum violence, UN peace forces tend to be authorized and deployed well after the point of origin. More lives could be saved, and human rights abuses prevented if an emergency force were deployed much earlier, ideally before violence begins. For that to occur, it is not only the willingness of the Security Council to do so, but also having the capacity to predict violence onset more accurately. This would likely require organizational capacity within the UN in the form of a unit specifically dedicated to conflict monitoring

and prediction, including having liaison arrangements with national intelligence services who do the same.

Finally, the lag time between the first UN resolutions and the deployment of peace forces, allows combatants to adapt strategically by killing more civilians. Shortening that time would mitigate this effect and also address one of the concerns noted above with respect to early warning – getting troops on the ground sooner along the escalation curve. An emergency peace force could play an important role. Deploying such a force could stabilize the

environment while deliberations continue, and the mandate of a peacekeeping force is negotiated. Thus, the emergency force could be a complement to the subsequent peacekeeping operation rather than a substitute, and early deployment would prevent the increased killing of civilians by the disputants.

The case for a UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) is strong, but its impact will be limited, or at least below its potential until barriers related to approval, early warning, and rapid authorization are addressed.

¹ The evidence is more mixed for peacebuilding missions, such as promoting the rule of law and security sector reform in countries recovering from civil conflict.

² B.F. Walter, L. M. Howard, and V. P. Fortna. “The extraordinary relationship between peacekeeping and peace.” *British Journal of Political Science* 51(2021): 1705-22.

³ P.F. Diehl, D. Druckman, and G.B. Mueller. *When peacekeeping missions collide: Balancing multiple roles in peace operations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023.

⁴ See for example, Ian Johnstone, “Why we need an International Standing Civilian Protection Service (SCPS).” December 16, 2021; Tad Daley, “When speed matters.” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 59 (2003): 22-25.

⁵ L. Hultman J. D. Kathman, and M. Shannon. *Peacekeeping in the midst of war*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021

⁶ S.H. Allen, and A. T. Yuen. “Action or inaction: United Nations Security Council activity.” *Journal of Peace Research* 57(2020): 658-65.

⁷ M. Gilligan and S. Stedman. (2003) “Where do the peacekeepers go?” *International Studies Review* 5(2003): 37-54.

⁸ There is already a long-standing peace observation operation there, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), in place since 1940.

⁹ See United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, “OHCHR: Prevention and early warning.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/prevention-and-early-warning>

¹⁰ See the associated data and analysis in M. Benson and C. Tucker, “Naming names: UN Security Council resolution sentiment in civil wars.” In *Handbook on peacekeeping and international relations*, 74-87, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

¹¹ J. Kathman, M. Benson, and P.F. Diehl, “Punching before the bell rings: UN signaling and pre-deployment violence in civil wars.” *International Studies Quarterly* 67 (2023): <https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/isq/sqad038>

¹² That exception was a UN observer mission in Tajikistan, which received no troops and only 81 observers at its peak deployment.