

International Interventions and Imperialism: Lessons from the 1990s

Marina Ottaway and Bethany Lacina

The increasing frequency and changing nature of UN interventions over the course of the 1990s led to concern over a new imperialism. In this period, the international community showed an increasing willingness to disregard the notion of sovereignty, and thus anticipated the more extreme doctrine of pre-emptive intervention recently adopted by the Bush administration. But the experience of the 1990s also shows that, far from imposing a new imperial order, international interventions have had a surprisingly limited ability to bring positive transformation to targeted countries, a dilemma that U.S. unilateralist interventions are likely only to aggravate.

During the 1990s, words that had practically disappeared from the discourse of contemporary international relations—words such as imperialism, protectorate, and trust territory—came into use again as the international community sought ways to cope with a growing number of civil conflicts around the world. Many of these conflicts did not fit easily into the dominant vision of the post-World War II international system, leading to international interventions that challenged the principles on which the United Nations was built.

The international system currently rests on the assumption that the world is constituted of independent, sovereign states, equal in their rights and prerogatives though greatly differing in their size, degree of development, and military strength. All countries, however, are assumed to possess the basic attributes of stateness, particularly the capacity to control and administer a ter-

Marina Ottaway is a Senior Associate in the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and an Adjunct Professor in the African Studies Program at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Bethany Lacina is a Junior Fellow in the same project at the Carnegie Endowment.

ritory clearly defined by fixed borders. From this basic assumption about state sovereignty flows the premise that other countries, or even international organizations, should not intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

The initial post-World War II reality did not correspond to this vision because much of the world remained under colonial domination. But in the ensuing decades, as the colonial empires disbanded and a host of newly independent states emerged, the situation changed rapidly. Membership in the UN increased from fifty-one states in 1945 to ninety-nine in 1960 and 159 in 1990.¹ In March 1990, Namibia was the last major country to move from colonial status to formal existence as an independent, sovereign state.

For reasons that will be explored below, a considerable number of these independent states sunk into civil war and, during the 1990s, became the target of intervention by the UN and other international organizations. In extreme cases, intervention led to the imposition of an international administration. These developments sparked debate concerning whether such multilateral interventions were legitimate humanitarian missions or essentially imperial acts. Now, this debate has been revived and transformed by the prospect of a project of unilateral interventions by the United States, which may already be unfolding in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This paper seeks to make a modest contribution to this complex issue by looking at the evolution of international interventions in the 1990s. It argues that changes in UN interventions over the course of the 1990s reveal an increasing willingness by the international community to disregard the notion of sovereignty and, in fact, anticipate the even more extreme posture recently taken by the Bush administration. But the experience of the 1990s also shows that, far from imposing a new imperial order, international interventions have had a surprisingly limited ability to bring positive transformation to targeted countries, a dilemma that U.S. unilateralist interventions are likely only to aggravate.

Declining Sovereignty

By the time an international system based on the vision of a constellation of sovereign states was being completed, four concurrent developments had already begun to undermine it. The first was the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union went the deterrence regime that not only

prevented war between the United States and the Soviet Union, but also precluded UN-sanctioned multilateral intervention in many conflicts. The rivalry between the superpowers had also made it difficult for external actors to challenge severe violations of human rights, even in weak states, because most had a superpower patron.

Second, growing evidence showed that many sovereign states had no capacity to control or administer their territories. States such as Somalia and Liberia became battlefields for multiple factions, often with hazy leadership, organizational structures, and political programs.

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states raised new questions about when the UN, other international organizations, or individual countries might legitimately intervene in a country's internal affairs. When no real government was in place, the idea that intervention constituted a violation of sovereignty unless requested by the government appeared outright absurd.

Third, the breakup of Yugoslavia bred a number of conflicts that straddled the line between civil war and interstate conflict. The complex mix of newly recognized states and non-state political entities, such as Republika Srpska or Kosovo, made defining sovereignty over and responsibility for a territory intensely problematic.

Fourth, a growing body of legal and academic writing justified international intervention in defense of human rights,² arguing that the fundamental human rights of subject populations were more important than the sovereign rights of the state. This policy camp supported intervention to protect citizens where a sovereign state was violating human rights.

As a result of these developments, the 1990s witnessed an unprecedented number of UN interventions, most of them in in-

trastate rather than interstate conflicts. Before 1989, only fifteen UN peacekeeping missions had ever been deployed, and all but three of these missions dealt primarily with interstate conflicts.³ Since 1989, there have been forty UN peacekeeping missions, only seven concerning interstate conflicts.

These interventions have raised concerns over the possibility of a new period of imperialism, even among people who previously worried that the international community was ignoring the growing number of civil conflicts and severe violations of human rights around the world. Fear of a new imperialism is particularly acute in parts of the world that have known colonization, where international interventions revive memories of the imperial past. After all, many colonial conquests and the establishment of many protectorates and trust territories were portrayed in their time as humanitarian interventions to deal with particularly abusive leaders, to bring civilization and higher standards of morality to heathen populations, and to improve the world.

The debate over international interventions and imperialism, still in the embryonic stages during the 1990s, has been transformed by the policies of the Bush administration. The U.S. National Security Strategy, unveiled on September 17, 2002 and setting forth the doctrine of preemptive intervention, first raised the alarm.⁴ The wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq have put the issue of imperialism center stage.

The doctrine of preemptive intervention argues that the United States has the right to intervene unilaterally in order to eliminate threats to its security, such as harboring of terrorists or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This right, as expounded by the Bush administration, is not limited to the elimination of the threat itself, but extends to the engineering of regime change—the replacement of an unfriendly, intrinsically threatening regime. Iraq constitutes the first foray down such a path of U.S. intervention not sanctioned by a UN Security Council resolution.

Rethinking Imperialism

In addressing the issue of whether international interventions constitute acts of imperialism, it is useful to consider briefly the main characteristics of nineteenth and twentieth century imperialism. It was defined by the imperial powers' prolonged domination over subject states and peoples and their use of colonial bureaucracies to rule conquered populations and exploit natural resources in the

pursuit of their own economic, security, and national goals. People thus ruled were subjects, not citizens. They were not integrated into the political and cultural regime of the imperial country. At the same time, however, the imperial powers saw themselves engaged in a civilizing mission to bring new, superior values and institutions to people considered, in the politically incorrect language of the time, backward, if not outright savages.

Even the most invasive multilateral interventions of the 1990s do not display the most objectionable characteristics of classic imperialism. International missions do not exploit a country's resources; instead, they provide new ones, often on a large scale.⁵ And while international missions superimpose a stratum of well-paid "internationals" on impoverished countries, juxtaposing two worlds that do not mesh easily, they do not, as empires did, create a blatantly discriminatory caste system based on an ideology of racial superiority.

Nevertheless, international interventions, particularly the interventions of the 1990s aimed at nation building, not just peacekeeping, have some imperial characteristics. During the Cold War, UN peacekeeping was largely confined to monitoring the uneasy peace between two states or political entities, as in Sinai, Kashmir, or Cyprus. In the 1990s, however, the international community has been forced to intervene in a greater number of civil conflicts. By their nature, these conflicts require a transformation of the governing system in order to ensure lasting peace. In many cases, international actors

thus became involved in a fundamental restructuring of the state. International actors influence the restructuring process by shaping the course of military events, for ex-

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ample, by trying to protect humanitarian aid routes or civilian populations, or even reinstalling regimes, as in Haiti.⁶ Or they use diplomatic pressure to dictate the terms of a peace agreement supposedly negotiated by the local combatants. Most importantly, international personnel aim to build democratic and stable political systems by supporting political reform and political reconstruction in the post-conflict period. All of these possible points of influence give international actors a chance to shape the

restructuring of the conflict-torn state. They therefore represent, to some degree, an external imposition of a new political framework, lending the undertaking some imperial characteristics.

Changes in this aspect of international intervention—its role in shaping military events and post-conflict outcomes—constitute the source of debate over a new imperialism. We now turn to examining the evolution of UN interventions during the 1990s—the increasing assertiveness of UN peacekeeping interventions, the more frequent recourse to partnership between UN forces and those of member states or multilateral organizations, and the growing attention to nation building—to better understand how these trends anticipate U.S. unilateralism and the implications UN experiences hold for such a doctrine.

United Nations Interventions in the 1990s

Since 1989, the UN has played a role in attempts to resolve over twenty internal conflicts, deploying peacekeeping missions in Angola, Namibia, Nicaragua, Western Sahara, El Salvador, Cambodia, various successor states of the disintegrating Yugoslavia, Somalia, Mozambique, the Abkhazia region of Georgia, Liberia, Haiti, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Guatemala, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan.⁷ Rather than analyzing these interventions individually, we will highlight here the main trends and the issues they raise.

Most UN missions in the early 1990s closely resembled the traditional peacekeeping missions of previous decades, authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Chapter VI missions are established, at the invitation of the states where they will be deployed, to support a peace agreement previously reached by the warring parties. They are essentially a confidence-building measure; each party to the conflict can rely on UN personnel to assess the other side's compliance with the peace agreement and thus feels more secure in honoring its own commitment. Traditional peacekeeping missions pose little threat to norms of international sovereignty and territorial integrity because they serve with the consent of all parties and play a noncoercive role.⁸

During the early 1990s, many UN missions fell into this traditional pattern and thus did not challenge the principle of sovereignty. However, the crises generated by violent civil conflicts in many countries gradually led the UN to deploy missions more ag-

gressively, even as fighting still raged and political agreements remained largely paper formalities. Such missions were designed to address the increasingly obvious threats posed by civil conflicts, humanitarian disasters, and state collapse. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali used the term “peace enforcement” to denote the role of such missions in a 1992 report titled *An Agenda for Peace*, released after the Security Council met in January 1992—at the level of heads of government for the first time in its history—to discuss the UN agenda in the post-Cold War world.⁹ Boutros-Ghali’s original concept of peace enforcement envisaged the possibility that the UN might coercively enforce cease-fire agreements. Because of the requirements of the situations UN peacekeepers confronted, however, the concept of peace enforcement soon expanded to include a broad range of activities, such as the use of UN troops to ensure compliance with some part of a Security Council resolution, or to enforce agreements reached by the warring parties.

Peace enforcement by the UN reached a high water mark in Somalia and the Balkans.¹⁰ Beginning in 1992, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia though conflict was still very much ongoing and a political solution remained elusive.¹¹ The goal of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Croatia was to halt genocide and ethnic cleansing, as well as to make humanitarian aid delivery possible, by setting up civilian “protection areas.” UN troops proved powerless, however, to prevent siege, bombardment, and, in some cases, military takeover of the protection areas. Nor did UN troops help to bolster a political process to end the violence. Croatian military power resolved the question of Serb separatism in that country, while the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) military strength forced peace accords in Bosnia.

UNOSOM II, the UN mission in Somalia that followed in the wake of the U.S.-led multilateral military campaign UNITAF (better known in the United States as “Operation Restore Hope”), was initially authorized to use military coercion to protect humanitarian aid and to ensure compliance with the parties’ cease-fire and disarmament agreements.¹² As in Yugoslavia, UN objectives in Somalia proved untenable except through actual combat against non-compliant parties. No UN member state proved willing to commit its troops to the prolonged urban combat required to forcibly disarm the factions. The humiliation of the missions in Yugoslavia and Somalia spelled an end to the boldest attempts to have UN blue helmets engage in coercive peace enforcement.

Table 1: Major Multilateral Military Interventions (1989–Present)

Traditional UN Role in Peacekeeping	Coercive UN Role in Ongoing Conflict Situation	Leading Role of Non-UN Actor in Ongoing Conflict Situation
Angola (1989)	Croatia (UNPROFOR in Croatia and UNCRO) (1992)	U.S.-led Intervention in Somalia (1992)
Namibia (1989)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNPROFOR in Bosnia) (1992)	French-led Intervention in Rwanda (1994)
Nicaragua (1989)	Somalia (UNOSOM II) (1993)	U.S.-led Intervention in Haiti (1994)
Western Sahara (1991)		NATO Intervention in Bosnia (1995)
El Salvador (1991)		NATO Intervention in Kosovo (no UN approval) (1999)
Cambodia (1991)		Australian-led Intervention in East Timor (1999)
Somalia (UNOSOM I) (1992)		British/ECOWAS Intervention in Sierra Leone (2000)
Mozambique (1992)		U.S. Coalition Invasion of Afghanistan (2002)
Georgia (1993)		
Liberia (1993)		
Haiti (1993)		
Rwanda (1993)		
Tajikistan (1994)		
Post-Conflict Bosnia (UNMIBH) (1995)		
Post-Conflict Croatia (UNTAES and UNCPSG) (1996)		
Guatemala (1997)		
Central African Republic (1998)		
Sierra Leone (1998)		
Post-Conflict Kosovo (UNMIK) (1999)		
East Timor (1999)		
Democratic Republic of Congo (1999)		
Post-Invasion Afghanistan (UNAMA) (2002)		

Source: Author information.

The UN became more hesitant in undertaking broad missions that would force UN troops into combat situations, but, on paper at least, its interventions remained robust, with a growing number of missions receiving mandates under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Under Chapter VII, the Security Council can authorize coercive use of force by UN forces or by coalitions of member states to maintain or restore “international peace and security,”¹³ with or without the permission of the host government. While the Security Council has approved a growing number of peacekeeping missions under Chapter VII, the missions have had relatively narrow objectives. Use of force has usually been limited to the protection of UN personnel, more rarely extending to the protection of civilians. And none of these peace-enforcing missions, except for UNOSOM II in Somalia, served without the permission of the state where it was deployed.¹⁴

As the UN ventured into increasingly complex situations where there was no real agreement between the warring parties, its interventions changed both on the military side and on the post-conflict reconstruction side. On the military side, the UN started partnering with, or completely relying on, non-UN multilateral actors to carry out peacekeeping functions. Among these partners were forces from the

Economic Community of West African States in Liberia and Sierra Leone, border patrols from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Tajikistan and the Abzakhia region of Georgia, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.¹⁵ In fact,

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with the exception of UNPROFOR and UNOSOM II, during the 1990s the UN relied on non-UN actors for all of the interventions that attempted to dramatically alter the course of a civil conflict. The post-conflict side of UN missions also evolved. Operating in particularly difficult civil conflicts and increasingly dysfunctional states, the UN was forced to take on complex “nation building”

(more accurately state reconstruction) tasks. In the following sections, we will examine these developments separately.

Military Intervention and the Growing Role of Non-UN Actors

The UN Charter entertains the possibility that the UN will take on significant military operations in defense of international peace and security.¹⁶ In practice, Cold War politics precluded such operations until recently. Even with the end of the Cold War and the increasing focus on civil conflict, the experiences of Yugoslavia and Somalia have dimmed enthusiasm for aggressive military interventions by the UN itself. Instead, the Security Council has opted with increasing frequency to authorize (or sanction retroactively) aggressive military interventions by voluntary coalitions of member states or other multilateral organizations. Examples include NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the U.S.-led UNITAF in Somalia, the Australian-led International Force East Timor, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements deployed in the Central African Republic, the French “Operation Turquoise” in Rwanda, and the U.S.-led force in Haiti.¹⁷

The UN has partnered with multilateral organizations and member states in its most aggressive interventions primarily because of the advantages partnering provides in terms of resources, coordination, and military capacity. In many of these situations, the UN has remained the lead actor, pressuring reluctant states to act in the face of crisis and humanitarian outrages and giving legitimacy to the interventions by sanctioning them under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

But such partnerships have often been difficult because of differing assessments of whether specific civil conflicts warranted a forceful military intervention. In several cases, one member state convinced the UN to take action rather than the converse. U.S. concerns drove the invasion of Haiti, for example; the reinstallation of the President Aristide was not a priority for many member states, but it was for the Clinton administration. Differing U.S., European, and Russian views of the Balkan conflict hamstrung UN peacekeeping in the region—one reason NATO finally took the lead in the military intervention in Bosnia. Kosovo marked an even greater break, as NATO bombed Serbia without UN authorization, and the UN became involved only later, in the post-conflict phase.

Like the intervention in Kosovo, the invasion of Afghanistan was not an international operation undertaken at the urging and with the explicit approval of the UN under Chapter VII of the

Charter. Indeed, under international principles the case for the invasion of Afghanistan is a complex one.¹⁸ In political terms, however, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) had broad backing in the international community. The UN had declared the Afghan situation a threat to international peace and security under Chapter VII even before September 11, and the Security Council subsequently passed multiple resolutions affirming both the right of member states to self-defense in the context of terrorism and the international and national threats posed by acts of terrorism.¹⁹ NATO invoked Article V of its charter to declare that the September 11 attacks represented an attack against all nine-

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teen of its member nations. By October 7, 2002 twenty-seven nations had deployed more than 14,000 troops in Afghanistan in support of OEF, ninety nations had formally joined the OEF coalition, and more than 160 countries had cooperated in freezing terrorist assets.²⁰ The UN immediately recognized the transitional government set up by the Bonn Agreements, and established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The UN also approved the formation of the ISAF security forces.²¹

It is thus clear that during the 1990s, the nature of UN intervention changed considerably. The proliferation of civil conflicts created greater demand for UN intervention, while the end of the Cold War removed the historical obstacles to a more active UN role. As UN activism increased, however, the weaknesses and limitations of the organization became more apparent. The UN suffered two humiliating experiences in Bosnia and Somalia, where it proved unable to carry out the tasks it had undertaken. In other cases, the UN found itself driven by the concerns of individual members or was unable to reach a consensus in its decisions to sanction Chapter VII interventions by other actors.

State Building

Despite the trend toward more robust military interventions in partnership with member states or other organizations during the 1990s, most UN missions focused primarily on post-conflict activities. These included the classic task of supervising and monitoring the implementation of peace agreements, as well as the newer task of state reconstruction. In theory, these attempts to fashion new political systems had an imperialistic character. The reality was quite different. Few state-building interventions really attempted to impose a new political order on stubborn local actors or to override power realities, and those that did have not succeeded.

UN post-conflict missions typically are deployed after the existing government and the armed opposition movements reach an agreement. Such agreements usually include a cease-fire, a commitment by both sides to disarm and demobilize their forces, the implementation of some combination of reforms and power sharing arrangements during a transitional period, and, finally, the holding of national elections.

In supporting these goals, UN post-conflict interventions have followed one of three basic approaches, which vary greatly in the way in which they interfere with existing power structures. In most cases, missions have simply relied on the existing administrative and even political structures; in others, the missions have helped to install a local transitional government instead; in the most invasive cases, the UN has set up international transitional administrations to run the country for a period of time.²²

Relying on Incumbent Governments: In many countries wracked by Cold War era civil conflicts, such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Angola, as well as in some where the conflict had more recent origins, such as Tajikistan and the Central African Republic, the UN relied on existing administrative and political institutions to implement each peace process.²³ In Haiti and Sierra Leone, democratically elected leaders who had been ousted by armed opponents were reinstalled and then, as in the previous cases, the management of the post-conflict process was turned over to the existing administrative apparatus.²⁴ The UN pursued this strategy for understandable reasons. Creating new structures requires time and money, and often causes much resentment. In addition, in the poorest countries with the least educated population, replacing personnel on a large scale is virtually impos-

Post-Conflict Approaches

Reliance on Reform or Power-Sharing w/in Existing Government and State	Local Transitional Governments	International Administrations
Angola	Somalia ¹	Namibia ²
Nicaragua	Liberia	Cambodia ²
El Salvador	Rwanda ¹	Croatia ²
Mozambique	Democratic Republic of Congo	Bosnia-Herzegovina
Haiti	Afghanistan	Kosovo
Tajikistan		East Timor
Guatemala		
Central African Republic		
Sierra Leone		

¹ In Somalia and Rwanda, plans to form local transitional governments were not implemented due to military events.

² Namibia, Cambodia, and Croatia all share many features of a post-conflict approach that relies on the existing state, despite the presence of an international administration. Please see endnote 30 to the primary text.

sible. But this caution has a price: such state-building missions operate within the constraints of old power dynamics, especially the control of security forces and civilian power structures, and therefore bring about limited change.

Despite the presence of a UN mission, dominant factions maintained their grip on both the military and the administrative apparatus in Cambodia and Mozambique. In Angola, both sides maintained their military capacity while theoretically implementing a peace agreement, only to return to open conflict immediately after the elections in 1992.²⁵ International initiatives to enhance the post-conflict government's security apparatus—usually by reforming, integrating, and retraining security and police forces—have not been very effective in overcoming challenges to state control, whether from remaining rebel factions, groups involved in banditry, or organized crime. Haiti and Tajikistan have remained weak states despite efforts to enhance the government's security

control and capacity to enforce law and order. The Central African Republic continues to be plagued by coups, and the hold of the government in Sierra Leone is tenuous in the face of resurgent rebel activity.

Civilian power structures also play a determinant role in post-conflict outcomes, especially during elections when control over

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state ministries and media outlets becomes a primary bone of contention. In El Salvador, Mozambique, and Nicaragua, for example, international efforts to create a level electoral playing field were frustrated by the different degree to which competing parties had access to state institutions or informal patronage networks.²⁶ In Tajikistan, the first post-conflict elections could not be internationally certified as free and fair, both because factions were able to manipulate the process through such tactics as proxy voting,

and because the state lacked capacity to organize and oversee legitimate elections.²⁷

Setting up transitional governments: UN missions have had no more success in fundamentally altering existing power structures when they have set up a transitional government rather than relying on the incumbent one. The UN has assisted or is still assisting the formation of transitional governments in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Afghanistan. Plans for transitional governments in Somalia and Rwanda were also drawn up but never implemented.²⁸ In Liberia, the DRC, and Afghanistan the agreements that ended the conflict called for the constitution of a local transitional government reflecting the power balance among military and political forces. Unfortunately, these cases show that such arrangements create incentives for each group to use the peace process to jockey for control and carve out as large a fiefdom as possible within the new government. In these situations, *de facto* power is usually controlled not by the designated officials of the

transitional government, but by warlords with their irregular militias, traditional authorities relying on patronage relations, or commodity smuggling networks. None of these actors tend to be reliable partners in building a stable or democratic state.

Even UN attempts to use a consultative, grassroots process in order to build a more democratic state have not been very successful. Afghanistan's *loya jirga* is the best-known example.²⁹ The *loya jirga* brought hundreds of local representatives together to participate in the formation of a transitional government. But far from circumventing the warlords, this process resulted in many of them manipulating the *loya jirga* and gaining positions of power. The warlords' continued influence is the greatest obstacle both to the consolidation of military power in the hands of the central government and to the emergence of a democratic state.

Imposing a strong international administration: In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and East Timor the task of political reconstruction has relied on the extreme solution of imposing an international administration to take full charge during a post-conflict period.³⁰ The Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and the UN missions in Kosovo and East Timor took over the administration of territory, the provision of security, and the management of the post-conflict electoral processes with the aim of returning power fully to local authorities only once new institutions and a new political system were in place.³¹

Despite the ample military and financial resources available to these international administrations, and the small size of the territories they administer, they have not been able to substantially alter the pre-existing distribution of power and develop democratic regimes. Bosnia and Kosovo remain deeply divided societies and would probably revert to violence if the international presence withdrew. The nationalists' election victories in each part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the limited participation of ethnic Serbs in elections in Kosovo reflect the continued salience of ethnic divisions. Elected officials in both areas compete for power with parallel ethnically-based quasi-state structures and burgeoning networks of organized crime.³²

Even in East Timor, which has the advantage of being a new country without warring ethnic groups or well-embedded warlords, political control has followed the pattern established before independence.³³ The Revolutionary Front of an Independent East Timor (Fretilin), which led the pro-independence movement, faces

few challenges to its political control, and its military wing forms the core of the new national army, suggesting that East Timor risks becoming a one-party state.³⁴ Even in what is arguably one of the most successful attempts at international nation building, the power structures of the pre-conflict period have been tremendously influential on the post-conflict nation that has emerged.

Implications for Unilateral Interventionism

The evolution of international interventions suggests that U.S. unilateralism, as expressed in the doctrine of preemptive intervention, is in part an extension of ideas and trends that emerged in the 1990s. The UN's increasing reliance on partnerships with other multilateral organization and member country forces, for example, led individual countries to take on responsibilities traditionally

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reserved for the UN, albeit with UN consent. U.S. unilateralism is also a reaction against the frustrating delays and compromises required to obtain Security Council decisions.

But the ideas set forth in the doctrine of preemptive intervention, and the U.S. attitude toward the UN on display

before and during the Iraq war, break with that trend in significant ways. First, the United States is seeking to shift final authority for authorizing internal interventions away from the UN and toward itself, relegating the UN to a position of secondary importance, to be called upon when convenient as a marginal contributor to essentially American undertakings.

Second, by arguing that the United States has the right to intervene not only to eliminate threats to itself and international peace, but also to put in place new regimes, the doctrine of preemptive intervention poses a new threat to the principle of state sovereignty. Not surprisingly, the debate on imperialism has intensified—unilateral American interventionism constitutes a far greater threat to the foundations of the international system than even the most aggressive multilateral missions of the 1990s. In

Namibia, Haiti, and Sierra Leone multilateral interventions supported regime change, but these cases have been justified as the return of legally recognized powers in place of an illegal *de facto* regime. The unilateralist American project appears to go much further. It justifies regime change not simply as a means of restoring a legitimate government, but as a means of removing threats to U.S. security interests as defined by the U.S. administration. Though all states have the right to defend their security interests, U.S. unilateral interventions, based on preemption of vaguely defined threats and undertaken without an international process of legitimization, would provoke widespread international resentment against the United States, as the war in Iraq already has. U.S. unilateralism may also furnish a license for unilateral interventions by other states, and thus become a source of instability.

In addition to the threat unilateral interventions pose to the international system and U.S. moral credibility, the experience of multilateral post-conflict reconstruction during the 1990s should be a major check on such a project. That experience demonstrates that interventions, even those with imperial characteristics and significant resources, often result in very little change to internal power dynamics. Even the tremendous military power and financial resources of the United States cannot necessarily keep its attempts to rebuild states and support stable, benign, and democratic regimes from being thwarted by local political realities. Rapidly transforming rogue and failed states will prove a daunting task, and unilateral intervention, shackled by international resentment and charges of imperialism, is especially unlikely to prove an effective tool.

The international community still does not have a satisfactory answer to the issues of civil conflict, humanitarian crisis, and state collapse that have brought the principle of state sovereignty into conflict with the international interest in peace and security. What is now necessary, however, is not a unilateral U.S. project of regime changes and state transformations, but the reinvention of international mechanisms in order to make multilateral interventions more responsive and more effective, while avoiding threats to state sovereignty and independence.

Notes

¹ UN Membership continued to climb throughout the 1990s as the newly independent states of the Soviet Union gained membership. As of the end of 2002, there were 191 member states. See the UN website for a complete listing of UN

membership year-by-year, <<http://www.un.org/Overview/growth.htm#3>> (22 June 2003).

² For discussion of the debate over grounds for humanitarian intervention see International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 2001, ICISS and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, Canada, <<http://www.iciss-ciise.gc.ca>> (22 June 2003); Francis Mading Deng et al., *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996); Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, "Intervention in Internal Conflicts: Legal and Political Conundrums," *Carnegie Endowment Working Papers Series*, No. 15, August 2000; Anne Julie Semb, "The New Practice of UN-Authorized Interventions: A Slippery Slope of Forcible Intervention?" *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 4 (2000): 469–488.

³ The three missions deployed in matters of primarily intrastate conflict were the United Nations Operation in the Congo (July 1960 to June 1964), United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (July 1963 to September 1964), and the Mission of the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Dominican Republic (May 1965 to October 1966). For an up-to-date list of UN peacekeeping missions see the UN Peacekeeping homepage at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>. This website also provides brief descriptions of all UN peacekeeping missions accompanied by links to the relevant Security Council Resolutions and Reports of the Secretary General.

⁴ National Security Council, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, September 2002), <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>> (15 June 2003).

⁵ Although plenty of international consultants and contractors make money from international interventions, the funds come ultimately from the international organizations, and thus the governments of the industrialized countries, not the resources of the occupied country.

⁶ For information about international intervention in Haiti see Sue Nelson, "Haitian Elections and the Aftermath," in Kumar Krishna, ed., *Postconflict Elections, Democratization and International Assistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 71–86; Chetan Kumar, "Peacebuilding in Haiti," in Elizabeth M. Cousens and Chetan Kumar, eds., *Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 2001), 21–52; David Malone, *Decision-Making in the UN Security Council: The Case of Haiti, 1990–1997* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁷ A complete list of UN peacekeeping missions since 1989 would include those sent to support interstate peace agreements, normally by monitoring borders and troop movements. Such missions have been deployed in Angola to monitor Cuban troop withdrawal (1989), Nicaragua-Honduras (1989), Iraq-Kuwait (1991), Macedonia-Serbia (1992), Croatia-Serbia (1996), Uganda-Rwanda (1993), Chad-Libya (1994), and Ethiopia-Eritrea (2000).

⁸ For a description of peacekeeping and peace enforcement functions and trends in UN missions see Jane Boulden, *Peace Enforcement: The United Nations Experience in Congo, Somalia, and Bosnia* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 1–19; Christopher Brady and Sam Daws, "UN Operations: The Political-Military Interface," *International Peacekeeping* 1, no.1 (Spring 1994): 59–79; David M. Malone and Karin Wermester, "Boom or Bust? The Changing Nature of UN Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 4 (2000): 37–54.

⁹ Boulden, *Peace Enforcement*, 2–3.

¹⁰ For information on international intervention in the Balkans see Richard H. Ullman, ed., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars* (Washington, DC: The Council on Foreign Relations, 1996); James Gow, *The Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Wolfgang Biermann and Martin Vadset, eds., *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998); Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For information on international intervention in Somalia, see John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1995); United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992–1996* (New York, 1996); Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995); and Ameen Jan, "Somalia: Building Sovereignty or Restoring Peace?" in Cousins and Kumar, *Peacebuilding as Politics*, 53–88.

¹¹ In 1992, the UN dispatched UNPROFOR to the disintegrating Yugoslavia. The mission took on very different tasks in its three primary theaters: Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia. In Croatia and Bosnia, the UN attempted to establish civilian protection areas and worked more aggressively to protect humanitarian aid. UNPROFOR was reorganized in 1995 and operations in Croatia were known as UNCRO after that point. In Croatia, the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium and UN Civilian Police Support Group supported post-conflict processes after the Croatian military put an end to international attempts at a political solution by resolving control of the last major areas of Serb resistance militarily. In Bosnia, the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was set up in support of the international transitional administration (known as the Office of the High Representative and not run by the UN) after NATO intervention led to the signing of the Dayton Accords. Finally, in Kosovo, NATO undertook military intervention in 1999 without UN approval. The UN mission UNMIK (UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo), however, is the lead actor in post-conflict Kosovo, forming the international administration for the territory.

¹² In 1992, the UN dispatched UNOSOM (later called UNOSOM I) to Somalia, where it had traditional peacekeeping roles. As the security situation deteriorated and humanitarian crisis ensued, UNOSOM I withdrew in favor of the U.S.-led UNITAF force. UNITAF helped secure delivery of humanitarian aid, and during its tenure new peace agreements were reached. UNOSOM II was dispatched in support of those agreements and initially given the task of enforcing both the safety of humanitarian efforts and the parties' disarmament commitments.

¹³ Article 42 of the *Charter of the United Nations*.

¹⁴ Because the Somali state had completely disintegrated, UNOSOM II was legitimated by a combination of a mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and agreements between some of the major combatant factions.

¹⁵ CIS consists of Russia and most of the former Soviet states. ISAF is the multilateral peacekeeping force in Afghanistan that is sanctioned by the UN but run, staffed, and paid for by the member states involved.

¹⁶ Sir Anthony Parsons, "The United Nations in the Post-Cold War Era," *International Relations* 11, no. 3 (December 1992): 189–200.

¹⁷ De Jonge Oudraat, "Intervention in Internal Conflicts," 23.

¹⁸ For an introduction to the invasion of Afghanistan and international law see Christopher Greenwood, "International Law and the 'War against Terrorism,'" *International Affairs* 78, no. 2 (2002): 301–317.

¹⁹ See the following UN Security Council Resolutions: SCR 1363 (30 July 2001); SCR 1366 (30 August 2001); SCR 1368 (12 September 2001); SCR 1373 (28 September 2001); SCR 1377 (12 November 2001); SCR 1378 (14 November 2001); SCR 1383 (6 December 2001); SCR 1386 (20 December 2001).

²⁰ *Operation Enduring Freedom: One Year of Accomplishment*, White House Press Document, 7 October 2002, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/defense/enduringfreedom.html>> (15 June 2003).

²¹ SCR 1383 (6 December 2001) endorses the Bonn Agreements. ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force, is run by member states, not the UN, and serves per the request of the Bonn Agreement. See SCR 1386 (20 December 2001) for details. UNAMA was established by SCR 1401 (28 March 2002).

²² See the official UN peacekeeping homepage to confirm the exact structure of the governing authority in each post-conflict situation, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>>.

²³ On El Salvador, see United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and El Salvador, 1990–1995* (New York, 1995). On Nicaragua, see Rafael López-Pintor, "Nicaragua's Measured Move to Democracy," in Krishna, *Postconflict Elections* and UN background reports, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onuca.htm>>. On Cambodia, see United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and Cambodia, 1991–1995* (New York, 1995). On Mozambique, see United Nations Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and Mozambique, 1992–1995* (New York, 1995). On Angola, see Marina Ottaway, "Angola's Failed Elections," in Krishna, *Postconflict Elections*, 133–152. On Tajikistan and the Central African Republic, see UN background materials, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>>.

²⁴ For information on international intervention in Sierra Leone, see the UN Peacekeeping website for reports of the Secretary-General and ongoing information, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/index.html>>; The International Crisis Group, "Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual?" *Africa Report*, no. 49, 12 July 2002; Paul Williams, "Fighting for Freetown: British Military Intervention in Sierra Leone," in *Dimensions of Western Military Intervention* (Portland: Frank Cass & Co, 2002). Namibia is the third and only other case of a UN peacekeeping mission supporting installation of an internationally legitimate government. Here, the UN peacekeeping mission relied on the bureaucratic capacity of the illegal *de facto* regime (the South Africa-backed white government) to implement the nation's first elections, while monitoring the regime's compliance with international agreements and eventual abdication of power. Although this situation is unique, it demonstrates the extent to which post-conflict processes rely on and are shaped by the extant state.

²⁵ On Cambodia, see *The United Nations and Cambodia, 1991–1995*. On Mozambique, see *The United Nations and Mozambique, 1992–1995*; J. Michael Turner et al., "Mozambique's Vote for Democratic Governance," in Krishna, *Postconflict Elections*, 153–176; Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Mozambique: A Fading U.N. Success Story," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (January 2002): 141–155. On Liberia, see UN background documents, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/>>

dpko/co_mission/unomil.htm>; Terrence Lyons, "Peace and Elections in Liberia," in Krishna, *Postconflict Elections*, 177–194; "Liberia: Unraveling," *International Crisis Group Africa Briefing*, 19 August 2002. On Angola, see Ottaway, "Angola's Failed Elections."

²⁶ On El Salvador, see Enrique A. Baloyra, "El Salvador: From Reactionary Despotism to *Patridocracia*," in Krishna, *Postconflict Elections*, 15–38; Robert C. Orr, "Building Peace in El Salvador: From Exception to Rule," in Cousens and Kumar, *Peacebuilding as Politics*, 153–182. On Liberia, see Lyons, "Peace and Elections in Liberia." On Mozambique, see Turner et al., "Mozambique's Vote," and Weinstein, "Mozambique." On Nicaragua, see López-Pintor, "Nicaragua's Measured Move."

²⁷ See United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 5 May 2000, S/2000/387.

²⁸ For ongoing reports on UN activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, see their official websites, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>>. See sources noted above for plans made for Somalia. See UN background materials for a description of the planned transitional political process for Rwanda, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unamir.htm>.

²⁹ In Somalia, Rwanda, and the DRC there were similar plans for grassroots processes that were ultimately overwhelmed by military events.

³⁰ For information on the structure and ongoing activities of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see its official homepage, <<http://www.ohr.int/>>. For information on the Kosovo international administration, see the official homepage, <<http://www.unmikonline.org>>; Alexandros Yannis, "Kosovo Under International Administration," *Survival* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 31–48. For information on the international intervention in East Timor, see Shalini Chawla, "Shaping East Timor: A Dimension of United Nations Peacekeeping," *Strategic Analysis* 24, no. 12 (March 2001); David Dickens, "The United Nations and East Timor: Intervention at the Military Operation Level," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, no. 2 (August 2001): 213–232; Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, "East Timor and the New Humanitarian Interventionism," *International Affairs* 77, no. 4 (2001): 805–827. In other countries, variations on an international regime were put in place. In Namibia, the UN administration had the authority to overrule the existing white regime that was administering the peace process because that regime was considered internationally to be illegal. In Cambodia, an international administration was in place to supervise the state bureaucracy, but it proved, in practice, unable to curb the control of the ruling political party over the government apparatus. Finally, in Croatia, an international administration was in place to administer Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium for twelve months while elections were held and the region was reintegrated into Croatia. This came in the aftermath of the Croatian military's forcible recapture of these regions in defiance of a UN presence and its calls for a negotiated solution to the conflict.

³¹ In the case of Kosovo, the international administration's task is complicated by the fact that Kosovo is not recognized as an independent country and devolution of power to local authorities cannot take place fully until the ultimate political status of Kosovo is resolved. It is not yet clear whether Kosovo will become an independent nation or will be reincorporated into the federation of Serbia and Montenegro.

³² On Bosnia, see David Chandler, "Bosnia: Prototype of a NATO Protectorate," in Tariq Ali, ed., *Masters of the Universe? Nato's Balkan Crusade* (New York: Verso, 2000); The International Commission on the Balkans, *Unfinished Peace* (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996); Ivo H. Daalder and Michael B. G. Froman, "Dayton's Incomplete Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1999): 106–113. On Kosovo, see Tim Judah, "Greater Albania?" *Survival* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 7–18; Yannis, "Kosovo Under International Administration." Also, see the extensive and ongoing series of reports of the International Crisis Group on the situation in the Balkans, <<http://www.crisisweb.org/>>.

³³ See sources on East Timor listed above and also Jarat Chopra, "Divided Rule," *The World Today* 57, no. 1 (January 2001): 13–15; "Freedom's Disappointments," *Economist*, 22 March 2003, 39.

³⁴ Fretilin currently holds fifty-five of eighty-eight seats in the Constituent Assembly; the next largest party holds seven. *CIA World Factbook: 2002*, Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tt.html>> (22 June 2003).