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The New International Security Order Changing Concepts

Inis L. Claude, Jr.

PERHAPS IT IS TRUE THAT THERE is nothing new under the sun. Certainly, the list of problems that the world now faces as it strives for order, security, stability, and peace is not an altogether new one. Along with elements of novelty, it includes modified versions of the perennials of international politics and resurgent problems come back from the past to haunt us; in some eight decades, we have gone from Sarajevo to Sarajevo!

If our problems are not predominantly new, neither are our ideas for dealing with them. Concepts are rarely products of pure cogitation; they generally derive from practice, from the trial and error of effort. We reflect upon our experience and thus develop concepts to explain and justify, to make sense of, what we have done. So we have old concepts that have been touted, criticized, tried, abandoned, revived, and revised. We also have some that appear quite new—but close examination usually reveals that they are largely products of the intellectual recycling process.

If the formulation and revision of concepts are initiated by our efforts to deal with problems, then the examination of our changed and changing concepts pertaining to international security can properly start with a look at the circumstances of the world today. What are the threats and challenges that most urgently require attention? What needs to be done if world order is to be achieved and maintained?

Champions of world order have long been preoccupied with the problem of international aggression, regarding as the crucial variety of international misbehavior the deliberate choice of war against another state in order to satisfy a policy objective. It may be that the danger of wars of aggression has diminished in the wake of the remarkable changes that have swept the world in recent years;

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certainly, the dismantlement of the Soviet Union has relieved the United States of anxiety about the possibility of being attacked by a formidable adversary. If, however, any evidence were needed that states will still sometimes resort to war to get what they want, that evidence has already been supplied by the regime of Saddam Hussein. The problem of deterring and defeating aggression remains firmly on the world's list.

States engaged in hostilities are not always easily and clearly identifiable, however, as aggressors or defenders against aggression. Events culminating in war are often of such complexity that it is extremely difficult to make a confident judgment—and utterly impossible to form an international consensus—as to where the labels of aggressor and victim should be attached. In many cases, we may reasonably conclude that those labels are simply inappropriate. States may find themselves at war when both of them are in some measure at fault but neither of them has really opted for war. They may have drifted or stumbled or slid into war, or been drawn into it, without a calculated decision by either of them to resort to arms in pursuit of its goal. For instance, it may be argued that World War I, in contrast to World War II, was a product of the circumstances in which the parties got themselves enmeshed, rather than of any state's deliberate choice. Such "predicament wars," as well as "policy wars," threaten world order. In the post-Cold War era, there are plenty of things for states to fight about—ambitions, fears, frustrations, suspicions, disputed territories, endangered resources, etc.—and we have to expect that armed conflicts between states will remain a feature of international relations.

It might be argued that twentieth-century seekers of world order have been unduly concerned about war, inasmuch as making war—though it is, of course, of critical importance—is not the only activity by which states damage each other and threaten the stability and order of the international system. We have concentrated too nearly exclusively on the problem of controlling resort to war, paying too little heed to the other varieties of international misbehavior in which states are wont to indulge. I think this excessive narrowness in the definition of the problem of world order is being remedied; our concept of order and security is in process of being enlarged to encompass the requirement of coping with non-military types of antisocial behavior. These include unfair trade practices, interference with the international transportation system in its various aspects, denial of access to essential natural resources, and degradation of the global environment. Decent performance in international relations is coming to be recognized as involving a great deal more than merely refraining from aggression; an orderly and secure international system requires more than mere peace, vital though that is. Saddam Hussein as international arsonist as well as international aggressor illustrates the broadening conception of world order.

Moreover, it is probably more than ever before true, and is certainly more than ever before recognized, that what goes on *inside* states is relevant to the task of managing international relations. Indeed, it appears that most observers today are agreed that for the foreseeable future, the international order will be threatened less by aggression across state boundaries than by strife within them.

We can identify at least three types of domestic situation that contribute notably to the problem of international order and security. The first of these is the familiar category of civil, or internal, war. In some instances these are secessionist struggles, in which one side aims at a result directly affecting the international system by altering the boundaries of one or more states or by creating an additional member of the state system. More frequently, civil wars concern the survival or replacement of the state's existing government. For all the vaunted progress toward the universal adoption of democracy, it is a fact that in many, perhaps most, of the world's political units the questions of who shall rule and for how long are not reliably answered by orderly constitutional processes. The abundance and bitterness and destructiveness of civil wars constitute a major problem for world order.

A second variety of internal problem may be defined as sheer chaotic anarchy—not a contest between a government and its challengers but the absence of government and the dissolution of a society into something uncomfortably reminiscent of Hobbes's state of nature, the war of all against all. This is the sort of thing that we have encountered in Somalia, and we have reason to fear that it may be repeated elsewhere. The world is perhaps beginning to reap the harvest sown by premature and ill-prepared decolonization. New states that appeared non-viable but unaccountably survived seem now, in a disconcerting number of cases, on the verge of collapse, making it manifest that the failure of the concept of trusteeship to catch on and to work effectively is one of the tragedies of our century. This phenomenon is surely a significant aspect of the problem of international security and order.

The third type of domestic situation to which I should like to direct attention might be described as a situation in which there *ought* to be, but is not, a civil war—misgovernment and repression so severe that rebellion might well be justified but is virtually impossible. At the risk of beating up on Saddam Hussein too regularly, we might say that that gentleman threatens world order not only as aggressor and as arsonist but also as tyrant. A tyrant who makes himself eligible for rebellion may stimulate—and justify—intervention from outside, thereby having a direct impact upon international relations. The problem of what to do about the egregious domestic misbehavior of governments has a prominent place on today's international agenda.

One could expand indefinitely the list of problems confronting the world, but I think we have in broad terms identified the major components of the

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problem of international order and security. We have noted that the dimensions of that problem have changed and are changing. What remains for us now is to examine the world's changed and changing stock of ideas for coping with that problem.

The centerpiece of twentieth-century thought about world order has been the doctrine, often and with some justification characterized as the Wilsonian doctrine, of *collective security*. This label has been applied with considerable abandon to any number of recipes for the improvement of international relations; indeed, I should say that it has inspired the occasionally deliberate misappropriation of ideological funds. Collective security in its original meaning, however,

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referred to a specific method for promoting order: an arrangement whereby an organized community of states would deter aggression by a credible commitment to squelch it, or, if that should fail, would defeat aggression by predictable collective resistance, so that every potential aggressor would be intimidated and every potential victim of aggression would be reassured. The security of all states would be guaranteed by the collective agency. That is the attractive promise of the collective security scheme. But there is a rub. The system obligates all states to contribute as needed to the collective defeat of determined aggressors—that is, to accept the risk and pay the cost of choosing to enter what might become full-fledged wars, a choice that might violate their own calculations of national interests, their own sentiments and preferences, and quite possibly their own popular mandates. Collective security offers what may be a very expensive lunch!

The idea of collective security has had a curious history, in that both students and practitioners of international relations have waxed simultaneously euphoric about its promised benefits and apoplectic about its threatened costs; we have been unable either to accept it or to acknowledge our abandonment of it. We reject and repudiate it in practice but persist in coddling it in theory. A major episode in our love-hate relationship with collective security was occasioned by Iraq’s conquest of Kuwait and apparent threat to Saudi Arabia. Acting for the United States, President Bush secured the authorization of the UN Security Council, as well as the acquiescence of virtually all states and the assistance of some of them, and launched a coalition effort that undid the aggressive gains of Saddam Hussein. This was approximately what might have occurred if a collective security system had been in existence (except that the existence of

such a system, ideally, would have deterred Iraq in the first place), and President Bush chose to present it as the beginning of a United Nations collective security system that would henceforth operate to prevent or punish all resorts to aggression and thereby safeguard the security of all states. Although various others joined in this outburst of hyperbole, there is to my knowledge absolutely no evidence that the United States or any other member of the multistate system is seriously willing to contemplate the acceptance of the commitments, the bearing of the burdens, and the running of the risks that would be entailed by the establishment and operation of a general system of collective security. As most statesmen well know, idealism is one thing, but imprudence is quite something else.

What has happened is that the concept of collective security has been substantially trimmed back. Woodrow Wilson's aspiration for a system that would guarantee collective response to every act of aggression has given way to an understanding that *some* acts of aggression *may* stimulate collective response. We have adopted, without articulating it, the concept of *selective* collective reaction to aggression.

This "sometimes, we may" approach to repression of aggression does not have the ideological attractiveness of collective security's "always, we will" approach, and its effectiveness as deterrent and reassurance falls far short. The great merit of selectivity, however, lies in its conformity with the reality that acts of aggression vary widely in important respects: (1) in the degree to which they appear to threaten the stability of the global system (not every aggressor is a Nazi Germany); (2) in the nature of the consequences that are likely to flow from their being permitted to succeed (the world rightly was less alarmed by what a triumphant George Bush would do in Panama than by what a triumphant Saddam Hussein would do in Kuwait); (3) in their capacity to incite an international consensus as to their moral and legal reprehensibility; and (4) in the degree of difficulty that their suppression would appear to entail. In some cases of aggression, but not in all, the United States and other leading powers may agree that it is necessary and possible, and they may convince the UN Security Council that it is proper, to undertake combined military action. The selection of cases—the decision to act in this instance, but not in that one—will not be easy, or free of controversy and recrimination, or necessarily judicious, but collective resistance to international aggression is and will be a discretionary phenomenon. The business of statesmanship is discrimination, and we can only hope that the leaders who make the choices about when and where to mobilize collective response to aggression will act with wisdom, courage, and prudence.

If collective security has been pruned by restricting enforcement action to selected instances of international aggression, it has put on new growth in that collective coercion has been increasingly considered, and sometimes applied, in

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cases of domestic or international misbehavior not classifiable as aggression. This trend has been evident for some years in the use of the United Nations to bring pressure to bear, including occasionally formal diplomatic and economic sanctions, upon regimes whose policies have been regarded as incompatible with UN positions on such matters as decolonization, racism, and human rights. The most conspicuous example of the turning of collective enforcement against non-aggressive malfeasance is provided by what the United Nations has attempted in Iraq since Desert Storm—inspection and in some cases dismantling of military facilities, and imposition of restraints designed to protect Kurds and other mistreated minorities. This collective intervention into Iraqi affairs is occasioned by Iraq's status as a convicted and defeated aggressor not yet restored to good international standing. It appears, however, to herald the introduction of a new concept, growing out of the collective security doctrine: the collective suppression of governmental behavior, in the domestic or the international arena, deemed unacceptable by the UN.

The next concept whose alteration demands our attention is that of *peace-keeping*. This notion, not mentioned in the United Nations Charter, grew out of pragmatic responses to the 1956 Suez crisis and the 1960 eruption in the newly independent Congo, now known as Zaire. In its original version, peace-keeping entailed the insertion, with the consent of all relevant parties, of a UN force into a troubled zone in order to assist the parties in maintaining a precarious peace—that is, to help them carry out their resolve to avoid beginning, or resuming, war with each other. Note that peace-keeping presumed the absence of aggressive intent: both sides wanted peace but feared the inadvertent outbreak of military conflict and were sensible enough to acknowledge their need for third-party assistance in preventing that calamity. The UN force, composed of contingents voluntarily supplied by states acceptable to the parties as sufficiently evenhanded to be trustworthy, had a non-fighting mission, a pacifying and neutralizing function. From the point of view of the United Nations, the proximate aim of preventing a local war was primarily a means to the larger objective of encouraging the superpowers to refrain from intervening competitively in unstable situations and thereby risking a confrontation that might precipitate World War III. A neutral UN was attempting to help the superpowers contain their Cold War. Peace-keeping forces, fielded and operated more or less in accordance with the model just described, have been a persistent feature of the international landscape for nearly forty years.

The termination of the Cold War and the demise of the USSR have eliminated the ultimate aim of providing safeguards against an uncontrollable confrontation between the superpowers, but the global system retains a significant stake in preventing the breakdown of peace in the world's various neighborhoods. Although a major goal of peace-keeping at the start was to exclude the great

powers from involvement, those missions have always depended heavily on those powers, especially on the United States, for financial and logistical support. Today the rationale for their exclusion has virtually disappeared, and there is a growing expectation of their full participation. Peace-keeping in its original form is a continuing and growing function of the United Nations.

“There is nothing to be gained, and much to be lost, by stretching the concept of peace-keeping to cover . . . full-scale military operations to frustrate governments or other armed entities that are determined to fight for their objectives.”

But peace-keeping has also changed, becoming steadily more diverse in its implications. Almost from the beginning, its application was extended beyond straightforward international situations to situations of mixed domestic and international character, and now its primary zone of applicability is the incipient or aborted civil war. The first instance of involvement in a mixed situation, one characterized primarily by internal strife, was the case of the Congo in 1960. In this case, the UN peace-keeping force was supplemented by a civilian component that undertook numerous and vital administrative tasks to help maintain a society whose governing apparatus was seriously inadequate. Moreover, as the civil-war aspects of this situation became increasingly predominant, UN forces were inexorably drawn into a quasi-belligerent role, and the awkwardness of attempting to be peace-keepers in the absence of a peace to be kept became painfully evident. The confusion, difficulty, and political recrimination stemming from this involvement in belligerency threatened to abort the development of the United Nations' peace-keeping career, but the notion of peace-keeping somehow managed to survive.

It is now clear that the Congo case offered a foretaste of things to come: the expansion of peace-keeping functions and the blurring of the line between the concepts of peace-keeping and of peace-enforcement.

Let us examine the additional functions that have recently been undertaken by, or contemplated for, military forces supplied by member states for operations under the authority of the United Nations, operations usually described as falling within the increasingly capacious and indistinct rubric of peace-keeping missions. The first of these, illustrated by the cases of Somalia and Bosnia, is the protection of humanitarian relief operations, making possible the provision of food and medical assistance to civilian victims of the savagery of internal war and even anarchic disorder. It may be difficult to justify calling this useful activity peace-keeping, but it does entail the injection of foreign troops to serve essentially as guards rather than as combatants, with the ostensible intention not

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of influencing the outcome of the armed conflict but only of minimizing the suffering of civilians. It is, thus, entirely compatible with the notion of peace-keeping.

Another recent expansion of the concept of peace-keeping is the notion of inserting troops not to keep a peace but to promote the creation of a peace—that is, to press for a cease-fire and diplomatic settlement. The second phase of the UN-sponsored intrusion into Somalia, for instance, entails the use of troops to bring pressure upon the parties to stop fighting, accept disarmament, and begin negotiating; collective intervention is increasingly likely to be contemplated for that purpose in other conflicts. Peace-keeping was originally conceived as a function distinct from pacific settlement, albeit intended to maintain a situation in which such resolution of issues might be pursued. Old-fashioned peace-keeping has, however, tended to run on at great length (consider the Cyprus operation, going since 1964!) without being terminated by a definitive settlement; as a result, some observers have suspected that peace-keeping discourages, rather than encourages, pacific settlement. This new variety of peace-keeping is in effect merged with the pacific settlement, or *peace-making*, function. Its agents seek to promote the making of a peace, so that they will have a peace to keep.

Next, we find peace-keeping being invoked as an essential part of a settlement package: the United Nations sponsors, and is deeply involved in, negotiations to create a settlement, with the understanding that a peace-keeping force will undertake a variety of duties, possibly including the monitoring and even the administration of elections, having to do with the implementation of the settlement. The UN's involvement in Cambodia is an instance of this version of peace-keeping, which in some cases may extend even to the UN mission's serving as a virtual interim government. In some respects, this function of presiding over the execution of the terms of a settlement may be thought to resemble the idea of a United Nations trusteeship more than the original idea of UN peace-keeping.

The two final developments on my list depart so far, it may be argued, from the original idea of peace-keeping that they represent deviations from, rather than derivatives of, that concept. The first of these is the provision of military personnel to enforce an agreed settlement, offering in effect an international guarantee of the terms of settlement. For instance, at this writing there is a possibility, however unlikely, that a settlement may be reached by the parties to the conflict in Bosnia, with the expectation that its terms would be enforced by Nato, acting for and under the authority of the United Nations. The United States has declared its readiness to take part in such an enterprise—if and when the parties to the conflict reach a settlement among themselves. This project seems to conform with the literal meaning of peace-keeping: if the parties make a peace, we will help to keep it. In important respects, however, it leaves

peace-keeping behind in favor of something more closely resembling collective action against aggression or other misbehavior. What is involved in guaranteeing adherence to the terms of a settlement is not assisting all parties in maintaining a precarious peace but offering armed resistance to a violation of agreed terms by any party—that is, fighting to defeat illegal action that may amount to aggression.

The second of these final developments on my list represents an even more definitive shift from peace-keeping to collective waging of war. I refer to the idea of UN-sponsored military action to *impose* a settlement deemed appropriate by the Security Council but rejected by one or more of the parties. In the Bosnian conflict, there have been recurrent suggestions of resort to such action, typically characterized by the conviction that “the Serbs,” a term that presumably includes both the Serbian regime in Belgrade and the Serbian minority in Bosnia, have committed aggression and should therefore be treated as Iraq was treated in regard to Kuwait—that is, be told to get out or face the prospect of being forced out. That approach to the situation in what was formerly Yugoslavia is conceivably the necessary and proper one, but it clearly falls under the heading of selective collective response to aggression, our diminished version of collective security, rather than under the peace-keeping rubric. It contemplates a combat role for the UN force, rather than non-fighting functions, and the coercion of one side to the benefit of the other rather than evenhanded treatment of the parties. That kind of campaign would require a vastly different apparatus than a peace-keeping force directed by the Secretary-General; the appropriate analogy is not the United Nations Emergency Force or UNFICYP or ONUC,* but the coalition that fought under UN authority in Korea or in Kuwait. When one considers the waging of war on behalf of the United Nations, one has clearly gone well beyond the notion of peace-keeping.

Our methods of dealing with the problems of world order require constant adaptation to changing circumstances. It is nevertheless essential to retain a clear distinction between those approaches that involve evenhanded treatment of the parties engaged in conflict and those that involve tilting to one side or the other. There is nothing to be gained, and much to be lost, by stretching the concept of peace-keeping to cover missions that must engage in full-scale military operations to frustrate governments or other armed entities that are determined to fight for their objectives.

* United Nations Force in Cyprus, and the Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo (known in English as the United Nations Operation in the Congo).