

It may be time to consider whether the international community is prepared to consider other military alternatives, along the lines outlined in the Agenda for Peace proposals. The new relationship NATO has developed with the UN in the Former Yugoslavia provides a promising case which could be expanded upon. Three weeks from now, at the UN General Assembly, I will discuss these questions further, but for the moment, I will confine myself to one brief observation: whatever paths we choose to take, they raise difficult questions on the limits of national sovereignty and external political will to act — sensitive but critical issues which we must address head-on.

The Agenda for Peace had useful things to say about how we deploy our international instruments to head off a slide into war and chaos, ideas that have met with some success in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and in Transcaucasia. But if we are to develop the idea of preventive diplomacy, we need to consider establishing internationally agreed criteria by which we assess what constitutes a slide into crisis — as well as the counter-measures to arrest this slide. There can be no question of an automatic process. No one wants to be bound in advance by abstract rules. But equally, no one wants to see each critical situation addressed through ad hoc measures, often reflecting the differing national interests of the outside powers most directly responsible for preventing crisis. Achieving a framework for early warning and preventive diplomacy will not be easy. But I think it is well worth further reflection and exploration.

A related challenge is to see whether global measures and instruments can be made more specific and more concrete through regional organizations which, by common agreement, are more sensitive to local conditions. What we need to get away from are two extremes — on the one hand the ad hoc approaches that confuse many current efforts at preventive diplomacy; and on the other hand the creation of a security policy strait-jacket so rigid that it will not work. We need a flexible policy framework, responding to security breakdowns of varying types and magnitudes. The CSCE [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe] has proved to be an effective tool of preventive diplomacy, using flexible mechanisms such as short- and long-term missions and a High Commissioner for National Minorities. Some lessons should be drawn from that experience.

We also need to look more closely at transitional situations. What I have in mind here are those situations where we move from relative insecurity towards positions of greater and greater stability. In many ways, addressing this area is the most complex issue of all. It is also an area rich in successes. Look, for example, at the reconstruction of postwar Europe and the building of NATO and the European Union. Look at South Africa and the end of Apartheid. Look at the current progress, albeit fitful, of the Middle East peace process. Examining the preventive measures we take to avoid a crisis, or the instruments we need to address a