

Preface

Anniversaries often trigger a retrospective look at what lessons might be identified for future endeavours. The 50th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) is no exception. In the past half century, constrained for the most part by the prolonged bilateral confrontation between the superpowers, the United Nations' role in maintaining international peace and security was often relegated to the margins. The ultimate promise of the institution envisioned by its founders was hardly realized.

Now, as it begins its second half century, the United Nations faces a radically different, but no less difficult, set of international circumstances. The end of the Cold War and the aftermath of the Gulf War have placed the United Nations front and centre in the quest for global peace and security. Restructured threats — primary among them the challenge of proliferation in all its aspects and resurgent fratricidal ethnic conflicts — confront the international community. As these menaces grow, the question posed is whether the United Nations is capable of meeting the challenge.

As a lead-up to the 50th anniversary, the Secretary-General has issued a number of insightful papers¹ which draw upon past experience and which postulate ways whereby the United Nations might respond more successfully to the challenges of the 21st century. As collective thinking and experience grow, a better understanding of the inherent linkages between the various processes involved in maintaining international peace and security is emerging, both among Member States and within the United Nations itself.

As a result of the evolving international security environment and the recognition that practical studies as opposed to conceptual ones are now required, four distinguished scholars — two Americans and two Canadians — were invited to come together to consider one dimension of how the United Nations and its constituent parts, including the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, might play a more dynamic and effective role in the quest for international peace

and security. Focussing on the decision-making process, they undertook to explore the significance of verification and the interplay whereby verification information, training and analysis might be fused to facilitate decision-making and operational processes within the United Nations family.

The study group notes, among other things, that the United Nations does not lack information. Rather, what it seems to lack is an ability to synthesize the information in a timely and effective fashion to support the decision-making chain. In addition, as yet, there appears to be no adequate early-warning mechanism. The study group also notes that although training is a prerequisite for establishing professional standards and for achieving success, the co-ordination of training on verification and the provision of specialist training within the United Nations framework is largely lacking. Finally, it points out that an efficient and capable strategic analysis capability in direct support of executive decision making, especially in the Security Council and through it the Secretary-General, is required. It concludes that there is a need to establish a centre that fuses these three functions of information, training and analysis; one that would report directly to the Secretary-General. Through this fusion of mutually reinforcing functions, the centre could support the Secretary-General in:

- developing, training and launching investigation teams (the experience of the UN Special Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency would be instructive in this regard);
- maintaining contact between agencies and organizations concerned with the arms control and disarmament process at both a global and regional level; and
- providing an indigenous planning, training and analytical capability that would be immediately available to the Secretary-General and, in some circumstances, directly available to Member States.

¹ *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, A/47/277, June 17, 1992, *New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era*, A/C.1/47/7, October 23, 1992, and *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the*

Secretary General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, A/50/60, January 3, 1995).