

Calling All Regio-Cops

is doomed to remain amateurish, late, and woefully under-resourced, as the experiences in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone have shown. A Wilsonian world this may be, but it is a miserly and self-absorbed Wilsonianism. Just as the death of the nation-state has been greatly exaggerated, so has the idea that the needs of the "international community" will ever trump national interests. Americans today may no longer have a clear idea of what their national interests are, but one interest of which they are quite sure is that their sons and daughters never again die in battle.

If the United States will not lead the charge for the U.N., no one else is likely to fill the vacuum. Indeed, despite the aggressively pro-U.N. rhetoric of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other Western leaders, U.N. peacekeeping today has been largely sloughed onto the developing world. As the Brahimi report notes,

In contrast to the long tradition of developed countries providing the bulk of the troops for U.N. peacekeeping operations during the Organization's first 50 years, in the last few years 77 percent of the troops in formed military units ... were contributed by developing countries.

OUT OF THE BOX

The report paints a bleak picture. But there may yet be a way out of this box—if the terms of the debate are drastically altered to account for regional devolution. The emergence of U.N.-sanctioned regio-cops changes many things. For one, it may allow us to finally leave behind the interminable debate between proponents of international norms and institutions (like the U.N.) and those who push might-makes-right realism. Under the

new system, without the imprimatur of a U.N. Security Council resolution, intervention by regional powers will become a mere invasion—however honorably motivated—and carry with it the threat of regional hegemony. It will be unwelcome to the locals and lay the seeds for future conflict.

On the other hand, without a force or coalition of forces representing regional military muscle, a perpetually cash-strapped U.N. is certain to continue to lose credibility, as it did in Bosnia, East Timor, and Sierra Leone before regional powers stepped in. Current events have forced realpoliticians and liberal internationalists, so long at odds, into bed together. One mindset has, in many situations, become impossible without the other.

This suggests what the most important future role for the U.N. might become—a legitimizer for local forces. To many nations, today's Security Council may seem more like a domineering Star Chamber than a fount of international jurisprudence. The council's image would certainly benefit if other major powers such as Germany and Japan were made permanent members, thus ridding it of its World War II-era mustiness. But flawed or not, the Security Council still has unique potential. It is the only effective tribunal and repository for international case law for dealing with ethnic cleansing and other humanitarian horrors. As such, it must continue to act as the arbiter of interventions.

The use of U.N.-approved regional peacekeepers will help solve another critical problem: how to keep humanitarian intervention aligned with national interest. Australia, watching the chaos in Timor just across the sea and perhaps fearing an onslaught of boat people, was only too