

could increase the risks of a conventional war, which could be fought — at least in the initial stages — on Western soil. With current technology, a conventional war would destroy virtually everything in its path, and kill tens of millions of people. The purpose of the Alliance is to deter *all* war. We and our allies have promised, in the U.N. Charter and in the North Atlantic Treaty, not to be the first to resort to force of any kind.

In rejecting the nuclear option for ourselves, we set an example, but we also dealt ourselves out of a seat at the nuclear negotiating table. Nonetheless, we have persevered in NATO, in the UN and bilaterally in encouraging the nuclear powers to reach agreement on substantial reductions of their strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals.

### **The United Nations**

In the time since the UN Charter was signed, great strides have been made in the codification of international rules of conduct. The UN has provided a forum for the discussion of disputes. Peacekeeping operations have proven to be valuable instruments for terminating hostilities and, in some cases, have been able to ease underlying tensions. The UN Secretary General has, in some circumstances, been able to play an effective leadership role in helping to resolve disputes. But with the admission of over a hundred new members, reaching agreement in the UN on concepts of law and justice has become increasingly difficult. There is no shortage of evidence that some states are still prepared to pursue their interests in contravention of existing international law. And on peacekeeping there has been a tendency, in recent years, for the UN to be by-passed in favour of other arrangements.

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The causes of conflict in the Third World have varied widely. Independence struggles, territorial claims and historical animosities have all contributed. But economic underdevelopment and inadequate distribution of resources have also encouraged resort to violence in order to effect change. In this latter domain, the UN's economic and social programs have had beneficial, preventive effects. The interlocking UN organizations have been indispensable in areas ranging from health care, to environmental protection, to agriculture, to refugee relief, to civil aviation. But confidence in parts of the UN system has been shaken by instances of poor management and a trend towards politicizing economic and social programs, notably in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Over the years, Canada has played a leading role in negotiating international conventions and in trying to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. A system based on international law and support for the United Nations remains the preferred Canadian approach to international peace and security. Renewal and reform are very much required, however, if the UN is to make the contribution to international security that its membership needs.

### **Human Rights**

Brutality, disappearances, mass murders, and group persecutions continue around the world. Institutionalized violations of human rights on the basis of race still occur. Displaced persons and refugees have become an important international humanitarian and political problem.