With the end of the Cold War and the increased cooperation evident in today's Security Council, there is no obvious reason why the UN cannot react more quickly to crisis. The absence of bipolar confrontation and consequent minimal recourse to the veto on the part of permanent members of the Security Council suggest a trend towards more effective and efficient international cooperation. At the same time, human rights and humanitarian concerns, once held hostage to the Cold War, have become part of the international peace and security equation. Finally, global media coverage continues to generate domestic and international pressure to act quickly, albeit on a selective basis.

All these factors weigh in the direction of developing the necessary instruments to deal quickly and effectively with emerging threats to international peace and security. It is worth exploring in greater detail some of the key trends which point to the need for a UN rapid-reaction capability.

International Peace and Security

Challenges to international peace and security since the end of the Cold War have primarily been from within states rather than between them. In his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* in 1995, the Secretary-General noted that, of the peace operations authorized prior to 1988, only one in five related to intra-state conflict. Since then, 62% of peace operations have related to intra-state conflicts, as have 82% of the 11 operations established since January 1992.[1] Unfortunately, intra-state conflicts usually have deep and tangled roots, which profoundly complicate the UN's search for resolution. The Secretary-General described them in this way:

The new breed of intra-state conflicts have certain characteristics that present United Nations peace-keepers with challenges not encountered since the Congo operation of the early 1960s. They are usually fought not only by regular armies but also by militias and armed civilians with little discipline and with ill-defined chains of command. They are often guerrilla wars without clear front lines. Civilians are the main victims and often the main targets. Humanitarian emergencies are commonplace.[2]

In response, the Security Council has acted in such a way that the definition of international peace and security has gone beyond traditional norms. There have been a series of ground-breaking examples: the mandate to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid in the former Yugoslavia, the use of the Unified Task Force to establish a secure environment and ensure the delivery of aid in Somalia, and the mission in Haiti to oversee and enforce the transition to democracy. This in no way implies that the UN has become overtly interventionist in the internal affairs of states. Nor does it imply that a rapid-reaction capability necessarily leads the UN towards interventionism. It does signal that the Security Council has become willing to contemplate action in a more diverse range of situations than prior to 1988.

These types of challenges — sometimes intra-state and increasingly complex — often require swift and decided responses. For example, in Haiti, the initial attempt to support democratic change was stymied by little more than a small gang of thugs. Had there been, for example, a more robust UN presence and a UN operational