

Perhaps the most significant change precipitated by the end of the Cold War was the new consensus in the Security Council. Many expected that this would result in a reduction in threats to world peace, less armed conflict and vastly improved international security. However, despite optimistic predictions, there has been a dramatic increase in armed conflict in the new uni-polar world, particularly in what are ostensibly civil disputes.¹⁸ These conflicts are often accompanied by a total collapse of institutions which provide the means of state and local governance, they frequently revolve around religious or ethnic differences and involve unusual cruelty which often targets women.¹⁹ Further, the main casualties are civilians²⁰ which has produced large flows of refugees and internally displaced people, the majority of whom are women and children.²¹ The dominant discourse about the security issues of the post-Cold War world is a narrative of small-scale crises which could threaten global security unless checked and managed. This has fostered a broader understanding of what might constitute threats to international security and the Security Council itself stated in 1992 that “[t]he absence of war and military conflicts amongst States does not in itself ensure international peace and security...non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to international peace and security”.²²

The changed conception of international security has had extensive

¹⁸ Of the 32 UN peacekeeping operations established between January 1988 and December 1994, 22 or two thirds have been in response to internal conflicts. Internal conflicts did, of course, occur during the Cold War but they were seldom treated as a threat to international peace and security. The Congo crisis was an important exception.

¹⁹ A Stiglmeier (ed), *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (1994).

²⁰ The percentage of civilian, as opposed to military, casualties of war has progressively increased since the first World War reaching the level of 90% in 1994. C Lamb, “The Laws of Armed Conflict” in Hugh Smith (ed), *The Force of Law: International Law and the Land Commander* (1994) 1, 17 referring to the results of a study reported in United Nations Development Project, Human Development Report (1994).

²¹ Jacqueline Greatbach, “The Gender Difference: Feminist Critiques of Refugee Discourse” (1989) 1 *International Journal of Refugee Law* 518.

²² UN Doc S/23500 (31 January 1992), statement issued from the Security Council Summit Meeting.