

the Secretariat, to a growing sophistication organizationally and operationally at the level of field missions. Many member states remain actively engaged in promoting these improvements and in working incrementally on the full spectrum of peacekeeping issues.

One particular, seemingly intractable issue that to some extent reflects the broader problems outlined above, is that of responsiveness. A review of several missions over the past five years clearly indicates that a more rapid, coherent response to an emerging crisis could have had a much more dramatic impact on the evolving situation than that which actually occurred. The example of Rwanda illustrates the problem in bold relief. Despite various unco-ordinated indications that a crisis was imminent, even a minimal response had to await the onset of crisis. At this point, the detailed planning and mounting of the operation were excruciatingly slow, with deployment of troops taking place months after they were officially committed.

Improving the UN's rapid reaction capability is not a new theme. The first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, raised the subject as early as 1948. Considerable attention was devoted to this issue as early as 1957 in the aftermath of the successful deployment of UNEF I in the Sinai. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping (Committee of 34) has also devoted considerable energy to the concept in the intervening years. Today, this topic is again near the top of the peacekeeping agenda, with a particular focus on the idea of a UN standing force as one means to achieve this end.

The resurgence of the theme of enhanced responsiveness reflects a number of recent developments in the international arena. With the end of the Cold War, 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, as well as the apparent end to rigidly defined spheres of influence, suggest that improved Great Power comity should lead to more effective and efficient international co-operation. At the same time, human rights and humanitarian concerns, once held hostage to the Cold War, have surfaced in a compelling way. This has led to a shift in political and strategic calculations from a strict emphasis on order to a more subtle one, in which the idea of justice enjoys priority. Finally, global media coverage continues to generate domestic and international pressure to act quickly, albeit on a selective basis.

These factors pose challenges to the international community. Equally, they offer opportunities to act constructively in developing the necessary instruments to deal quickly and effectively with genuine threats to international peace and security.