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The Global Regime for Armed Conflict

Issue Brief

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Overview

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Scope of the Challenge

Preventing armed conflict, keeping peace, and rebuilding war-torn states remain among the most intractable challenges facing the international community. Every year, at least 250,000 **die** in armed conflicts, most of which occur within, rather than between, states. Armed conflict and its aftermath corrode virtually every aspect of society: law and order, human rights, socioeconomic development, education, basic health services, and the environment. The World Bank estimates the global economic costs for all conflicts at upwards of **$100 billion** each year. At the same time, conflict prevention, mitigation, and response are global concerns, because instability often spills across borders and triggers piracy, drug trafficking, small-arms sales, environmental exploitation, and terrorism.

After the shocking mass atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s, the United Nations (UN) and several regional organizations mandated new initiatives to address violence. The UN reforms improved its ability to monitor political developments, plan and support peacekeeping operations, and coordinate mechanisms charged with peacebuilding. Meanwhile, new arrangements within the European Union, African Union, Organization of American States, and other regional organizations

have increased responsiveness to instability and violence within their regions—albeit with varying levels of engagement, capabilities, and effectiveness.

But these international instruments have had a mixed record of success. In many cases, international institutions charged with promoting peace and stability lack the political consensus and financial resources to fulfill their mandates. Moreover, these institutions remain disproportionately reactive, and often neglect conflict prevention as a critical tool for managing armed conflicts. Most peacekeeping efforts still have insufficient manpower, money, and equipment to meet their overstretched mandates. And the international community too frequently fails to foster peace and recovery in war-torn countries.

Multilateral action can be an effective response to outbreaks of armed conflict, but international and regional approaches need to be enhanced and coordinated if they are to effectively address the range of conflict management problems facing the global community.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Overall assessment: *Unprecedented attention and reform, yet patchy focus and uncertain goals*

In recent years, multilateral institutions and governments have devoted increased attention to the challenges of international conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and postconflict peacebuilding. Over the past decade, the international community has begun to develop new tools and institutions to prevent and manage conflict. Partly as a result of such efforts, interstate and intrastate conflicts have declined by approximately **40 percent** since 1992. Although high-profile conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan consumed the majority of international attention and resources over the past decade, there have been notable successes involving multilateral conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts in less prominent conflicts, such as East Timor and Liberia.

Yet the international instruments designed to prevent the outbreak of conflict or end fighting remain unwieldy and, at times, ineffective.

Among the actors that exist to end conflict, the UN plays an indispensable role. Created in 1945 to "save future generations from the scourge of war," the UN enjoys universal legitimacy and legal status, thanks to its **charter**. During the Cold War, however, the UN found its practical role in international peace and security circumscribed. But the end of the bipolar confrontation and the increase in the number of intrastate conflicts in the early 1990s rejuvenated the UN's role in global conflict management. In 1992, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali released ***An Agenda for Peace,*** which outlined how the UN should assess and reform conflict prevention, mediation, and

peacekeeping in a post-Cold War context. It also introduced the concept of postconflict peacebuilding to support conflict resolution and prevent a relapse into violence. Over the ensuing two decades, the UN created or strengthened many of its programs, departments, and agencies charged with anticipating, preventing, and responding to conflict.

Within the UN, the Security Council is charged with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, including the authority to establish peacekeeping operations, impose international sanctions, and authorize military action. However, due to deep-seated political and ideological differences among its permanent members, the Security Council is often slow to respond to unfolding crises. The UN also manages conflict through its secretariat, which includes the **Department of Peacekeeping Operations** (created in 1992) and the **Department of Field Support** (created in 2007). The **Department of Political Affairs** (established in 1992) is the secretariat's focal point for conflict prevention, mitigation, and response.

Other UN departments, agencies, and programs have also adapted their mandates to operate more effectively in conflict environments. These include the **UN Development Program** (UNDP) and its **Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Response**; the **Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs**; the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**; the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**; the **Office for Disarmament Affairs**; and the **World Food Program**.

In the wake of the genocide and atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s, the UN implemented a series of new initiatives and reforms to improve conflict management. These included targeted sanctions to deter or end violence, expert panels to monitor the effectiveness of targeted sanctions on peace spoilers, and an increase in the use of special envoys and special representatives to the secretary-general. These advancements have been assisted by a relatively **active** [PDF] UN Security Council willing to authorize peacekeeping missions and sanctions to mitigate inter- and intrastate conflict. Most recently, in 2005, the UN created the **Peacebuilding Commission** (PBC) to foster integrated strategies for sustainable peace and recovery in the aftermath of armed conflict by securing resources and coordinating political, security, and development actors. After seven years, however, the PBC only operates in six countries.

Regional organizations such as the **African Union**, **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO), **European Union**, and **Organization of American States** (OAS) have also created and improved mechanisms to better respond to violence within their regions, albeit with mixed results. Most recently, NATO led a mission in Libya to enforce a no-fly zone and protect civilians, and the OAS successfully mediated territorial disputes between Guatemala and Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua, and Guyana and Suriname. The Arab League also played an unprecedented role in the ongoing Syrian

crisis by suspending Syria, initiating and leading an observer mission, and supporting an ultimately failed UN Security Council resolution that called for stronger action against the Bashar al-Assad regime.

At the same time, other multilateral bodies have strengthened capacities for conflict management. In July 2008, the **World Bank** established a **State and Peacebuilding Fund** to support peacebuilding projects in fragile, conflict-prone, and conflict-affected states. The **International Monetary Fund** has expanded its emergency assistance funding streams to cover postconflict assistance. It has also been more actively involved in building financial and fiscal systems in postconflict countries, including Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia. Because such international financial institutions are not viewed as as overtly political, states are generally more willing to accept monitoring, training, and assistance. Moreover, innovative partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society have established new norms and practices for conflict prevention and stabilization. The **Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative** and the **Kimberley Process** restrict governments and companies that exploit resources that fund and exacerbate armed conflicts.

Finally, a number of leading bilateral donors, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands, are investing in their own conflict management capabilities, such as enhanced early-warning systems, rapidly deployable civilian and military personnel, dedicated funding streams to conflict-prone and conflict-affected states, and interagency planning processes aimed at securing "**whole of government**" effort in conflict-plagued countries such as Afghanistan.

Despite the proliferation of multilateral and bilateral instruments, significant challenges remain. First, conflict prevention efforts—including early-warning systems—receive scant attention compared with peacekeeping and postconflict interventions. Second, UN peace operations—which have **increased dramatically** [PDF] in scope—are constrained by severe financial and personnel shortages. The UN Security Council contributes to this overstretch by authorizing and frequently extending the life of peace operations that lack adequate planning and realistic mandates. Aside from major **troop-contributing countries** [PDF] like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Ethiopia, the majority of UN member states do not commit the requisite number of troops and uniformed personnel. Finally, the international community's efforts to foster peace and recovery in war-torn states leave much to be desired. Despite the creation of the PBC, the international community still struggles to build coherent and coordinated policies. These challenges are exacerbated by poor management, corruption scandals, charges of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers, and loose coordination among the UN, regional organizations, and other players involved in peace operations.

Conflict prevention: *Strides in curbing interstate conflicts; major shortcomings in addressing intrastate conflicts*

Success in preventing conflicts from emerging or escalating has been mixed. On the one hand, conflicts between countries have declined markedly over the past sixty years, largely as a result of collective security agreements, a balance in nuclear weapons, and increased economic interdependence. In 2011, the **Uppsala Conflict** database reported only one interstate conflict between Cambodia and Thailand.

However, conflicts within states (including those involving nonstate actors) have increased dramatically, and now constitute nearly all high-intensity conflicts. In 2011, **Conflict Barometer** [PDF] reported that over 75 percent—301 of the 388 conflicts monitored—were intrastate. At the same time, the recurrence of violence within ten years in approximately **40 percent** of all postconflict societies further underscores the need for more robust conflict prevention.

The international community employs a variety of conflict prevention tools that target structural causes of conflict, conduct early warnings and assessments of emerging conflicts, promote cooperative measures such as mediation and dispute resolution, and act coercively. And yet, the multilateral tools currently available to reduce political instability and the likelihood of armed conflict within states are generally underdeveloped, uncoordinated, and deprived of the political authority necessary for effective application. For instance, there is currently no UN mechanism exclusively charged with aggregating, analyzing, prioritizing, and integrating early-warning reports of budding conflicts. In addition, when facing internal political crises, some member states invoke principles of state sovereignty and noninterference to deter international institutions from carrying out any effective role in conflict prevention.

The principal international body dealing with conflict prevention for interstate conflicts is the **UN Security Council**. However, by virtue of its political dynamics and the dependence on a convergence of political wills among member states, it remains deficient as an instrument for conflict prevention. Beyond the UN Security Council, the UN in general—as well as most regional organizations—has a poor record of preventing intrastate conflicts, such as civil wars, coups d'état, and state-sponsored mass killings. Over the past ten years, though, growing awareness of the costs of delayed intervention has mobilized UN efforts to prevent violence.

The primary UN body providing early warning assessment and mediation support is the **Department of Political Affairs** (DPA). The DPA produces analytical reports and briefing notes warning of incipient crises, and its specialized **Mediation Support Unit** (MSU) facilitates training of peacemaking mediators, supports specific mediation processes, and provides a databank of peacemaking experience. The MSU also deploys staff to work in individual crises at short notice through its **Standby Team of Mediation Experts**. In addition, the DPA manages **twelve political missions** [PDF] that cross a range of activities, including preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding

support. These missions vary in terms of mandate and capacity, but all **aim** to "provide a forward platform for preventive diplomacy and other activities across a range of disciplines, to help prevent and resolve conflict or to build lasting peace in nations emerging from civil wars." Due to a chronic lack of resources, however, DPA has a limited capacity to support missions in the event of unanticipated political crises.

The UN and regional organizations rely heavily on **special and personal representatives** (SRSGs), envoys, and high-profile leaders to inform and oversee negotiations specific to a nation or an issue, such as Kofi Annan and Lakhdar Brahimi handling the crisis in Syria. The UN has also experimented with establishing regional officers as platforms for SRSGs tasked with regional conflict prevention. The UN has had success using mediation resources in over a dozen conflict zones, ranging from border disputes between Nigeria and Cameroon to civil conflicts in Tajikistan to high-intensity conflict in East Timor. The African Union is working to develop a stand-alone mediation capacity, and has had some success in collaborating with other actors, as in helping to broker the **Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement** in 2005.

The UN also managed a preventive deployment mission through the **UN Preventive Deployment Force to Macedonia** from 1995 to 1999. The mission monitored and reported on the security situation along the borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and is widely regarded as a success that led to sustained peace and stability in the region. The lack of a permanent, standing military force at the disposal of the UN, however, limits the establishment of more preventive deployment missions.

Several regional organizations have also developed early-warning systems. The **European Union** and the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** both have relatively advanced systems. The **Organization of American States** (OAS) has made some important strides toward playing a more active preventive role by promoting democratic principles and leveraging various international dispute settlement mechanisms, such as the secretary-general's "good offices" and use of "special missions." In a 2011 meeting, OAS member states proposed a formal early-warning system to prevent coups, although plans have yet to move forward. In Africa, the **most developed** [PDF] include the **Economic Community of West African States Early Warning and Early Response Network** and the **Intergovernmental Authority on Development Conflict Early Warning Response Mechanism in Africa**. Despite updates, both systems remain limited in coverage and response. Increased bilateral support from major donors for early-warning and mediation efforts, including through U.S. Agency for International Development **initiatives** and the EU **African Peace Facility** [PDF], have strengthened preventive efforts. However, conflict analysis is still in its infancy and limited early warning is not adequately integrated with policy responses.

Strengthening peacekeeping operations: *Expanded scope and pace, yet overstretched*

Multilateral peacekeeping efforts have become simultaneously more common and complex in recent years. Over the past decade, the UN has been the largest actor in such efforts, having supervised a number of successful peacekeeping operations, including most recently in Central Africa, Chad, and Sudan. Nevertheless, peace operations are inadequately resourced with overstretched mandates. Against a backdrop of growing transnational threats and competing agendas, the global demand for peacekeeping exceeds the global willingness and capacity to provide monetary or operational support for peace operations.

Multilateral peacekeeping has evolved significantly since its origins in the early post-World War II era. Although not mentioned in the **UN Charter**, peacekeeping was predominantly conceived as a way to keep peace between states by inserting observers or lightly armed military forces to maintain ceasefires between opposing sides. Over time, both the scope of peace operations and the relevant actors involved have expanded dramatically. Most peace operations today occur in the context of intrastate conflicts, including those that may be still ongoing, and have more extensive ambitions—namely, to help countries ravaged by conflict create the necessary conditions for a durable peace. Such multidimensional efforts include humanitarian, military, political, and development actors who work toward intertwined goals of promoting security, advancing good governance and the rule of law, and paving the way for economic development.

Over the past fifteen years, the UN has engaged in peacekeeping efforts in the midst or the aftermath of civil wars, genocide, mass atrocities, terrorism, and radical Islamist insurgencies. Ten years ago, twenty-seven thousand UN peacekeepers were deployed in fifteen operations. Today the UN oversees sixteen operations and over ninety-eight thousand peacekeepers around the world, managed by the **Department of Peacekeeping Operations** (DPKO). DPKO currently operates missions in Sudan, South Sudan, the DRC, Ivory Coast, the Western Sahara, Haiti, and Lebanon. Although the UN established a **Department of Field Support** (DFS) in 2007 to help bridge gaps between headquarters and field staff, coordination remains patchy.

The **UN Security Council** has the ultimate responsibility for authorizing and (at the highest level) supervising peace operations. The role of the UN Security Council implies that UN peacekeeping missions are—for better or worse—subject to political bias in terms of their mandates. In order to cement political consensus for a mission, the UN Security Council often enlists the support of regional organizations. More recently, the UN Security Council has authorized missions under Chapter VII, "Actions with Respect to the Threats, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," which allows peacekeeping operations to use force for defense. For instance, it authorized or supported the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** and **Economic Community of West African States** to engage

in peacekeeping efforts in Libya, Afghanistan, Liberia, the former Yugoslavia, and Sierra Leone.

Several regional organizations like the European Union and the African Union (AU), also authorized peacekeeping missions (usually as a result of an UN-decreed mandate), and developed their own institutional capacity to plan, manage, and deploy peacekeepers. Increasingly, regional organizations are also acting in concert with the UN to form hybrid peacekeeping operations, such as the joint missions with the AU in Sudan and Somalia. Similarly, in the past seven years the first wholly military European Security and Defense Policy missions in Macedonia and Chad were all "bridging" missions where European soldiers made security and logistics preparations for the larger UN peacekeeping forces.

Despite notable successes, the UN and other multilateral and regional peacekeeping operations have suffered several major setbacks. The decade following the Cold War revealed serious shortcomings in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. In response to these failures, the UN initiated a series of restructures and reforms under the auspices of the **Report of the Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations** —otherwise known as the Brahimi Report—released in 2000. The report highlighted UN deficiencies in its conflict management capabilities and called for a robust doctrine with realistic mandates and the strengthening of information-collection and peacekeeping capabilities across UN agencies. In part because of these efforts, the UN improved its peacekeeping operations leading to successes in East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. However, a number of problems remain that hamper the success of peacekeeping operations.

First, UN Security Council mandates continue to be exceedingly difficult to implement with the forces and capabilities marshaled by troop-contributing countries, raising concerns that the mandates are unrealistic and suffer from mission creep. Given that the field commanders have too few forces, they are required to constantly prioritize which mandated tasks to attempt to implement within their area of operations. Correcting this problem will require the UN Security Council to rein in its ambitions and define clearly achievable peacekeeping goals.

Second, because the UN does not maintain its own standing army, it must rely on prospective troop-contributing countries to supply forces and equipment. Generating a full-fledged peacekeeping force takes nine to twelve months on average, although deployment times vary substantially based on political will. For example, upon receiving an expanded mandate, the **UN Interim Force in Lebanon** grew fourfold in two months, whereas the **UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur** (UNAMID) took more than three years to reach full deployment. In recent years, DPKO has led a campaign to enhance the UN's rapid-deployment capability, but it has received little support even among member states with the most relevant capabilities.

Third, in addition to delays in deployment, member states—including the United States—have often proven reluctant or unwilling to provide the military hardware and equipment (referred to as high-demand enablers and force multipliers) needed for mission success. One notable example of this gap is the unfulfilled request for eighteen medium-utility helicopters to provide tactical mobility for UNAMID troops, some of whom died because they were not quickly transported to field hospitals.

Finally, the quality of peacekeepers has been mixed, with uneven training standards among countries. Lack of common and professional training standards impedes progress and, in several cases, damages the reputation of UN peacekeeping. In 2010, **reports emerged** that UN peacekeepers from Nepal were the source of a deadly outbreak of cholera in Haiti, which has killed more than seven thousand civilians throughout the country. Equally disturbing have been instances of gross misconduct by UN peacekeepers in the field. The most alarming incidents pertain to sexual abuse cases in the DRC, Burundi, Haiti, and Liberia, where scores of men, women, and children were allegedly raped by UN troops. Although the UN has adopted a policy of zero tolerance for such conduct, it relies on troop-contributing countries to hold aggressors accountable for crimes committed by their nationals.

Preventing mass atrocities: *Getting attention, but not enough action*

International efforts to stop mass atrocities—genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes—remain inadequate. Although international treaties, legal innovations, and advances in transitional justice have provided the norms and tools to tackle mass atrocities, political principles of national sovereignty and noninterference often thwart action in this area. Despite George W. Bush and Barack Obama's pledges to "**never again**" stand by as atrocities are committed, they in fact continue in Syria and elsewhere. The International Criminal Court's (ICC) **lengthy indictment** [PDF] of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide serves as a stark reminder both of the stakes involved in the pursuit of international justice and the diplomatic and political obstacles to holding perpetrators accountable.

In the wake of the Holocaust, UN member states negotiated the 1948 **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** (Genocide Convention), which officially defined genocide and listed its five specific crimes: killing; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions on a group to bring about—in whole or in part—its physical destruction; imposing measures intended to prevent births; and forcibly transferring children from one group to another. The convention, however, contained no triggers for international response to genocide, and instead invited signatories to "call upon the competent organs of the United Nations" to take action.

Although 142 countries have ratified the Genocide Convention, the world has witnessed repeated

instances of genocide and other mass atrocities. These include the mass slaughter commited by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979; the Rwandan genocide of 1994; the July 1995 massacre of unarmed Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina; ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999; and the slow motion mass killings and starvation in Darfur between 2003 and late 2009. In each case, the international community failed to unite behind a collective response.

Recent reports of atrocities and war crimes in Syria point to continued prevalence of these crimes. Since the outbreak of antiregime protests in March 2011, more than **sixty thousand** people have been killed and over **six hundred thousand** have fled the country. But despite the rising death tolls and displaced refugees, the UN Security Council remains deadlocked, and diverging political interests and entrenched views on sovereignty continue to be a major impediment to more coercive action.

There have been a number of efforts to set up tribunals—including the **International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia** and the **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda**—and hybrid criminal bodies—such as the **Special Court for Sierra Leone**, the Crimes Panels of the District Court of Dili (East Timor Tribunal), and the **Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia**—that address particular conflicts. These initiatives have expanded the legal and judicial instruments available to hold perpetrators of mass atrocities accountable.

In addition, the creation of the **International Criminal Court** in 1998 provided another legal tool to hold perpetrators of mass atrocities accountable for their actions. The ICC has been aggressive in investigating and indicting high-profile criminals, such as Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. In March 2012, the ICC **issued its first verdict** convicting Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga of recruiting and using child soldiers. However, the ICC has been criticized for its disproportionate focus on Africa—all the cases under official investigation are in Africa (although there are preliminary investigations in Colombia, Afghanistan, Georgia, and Honduras).

The UN has also strengthened its capabilities to fight mass atrocities through more diplomatic channels. In 2004, it created the **Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide** (OSAPG) to collect information, and provide recommendations to the UN Security Council. To date, the effectiveness of the OSAPG has been mixed. OSAPG receives strong support from many UN member states for acting proactively to release statements of concern in situations characterized by massive human rights violations, although it is limited by a lack of resources.

The evolving norm of the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) could provide a normative framework for redoubling international efforts to prevent genocide and other mass atrocities. The concept of R2P is based on three pillars: (1) states bear the primary responsibility of protecting its citizens; (2) the

international community is encouraged to support states in this endeavor; and (3) in instances when states fail to meet their obligations, the international community should use diplomatic, humanitarian, and coercive pressures to intervene. In 2011, the **multilateral response** to the unfolding Libyan crisis proved to be an important step in implementing R2P. In the context of the civil war in Syria, however, R2P has not yet compelled a concerted international effort to prevent ongoing atrocities, casting doubt over the future of R2P as a mainstream operational tool.

Several regional organizations have also made the prevention of mass atrocities a rhetorical priority. The **AU Constitutive Act of 2000** includes "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity." Still, the AU is hampered by the participation of members who have been the very perpetrators of mass atrocities.

Civil activism in developed countries has also helped raise awareness and galvanize support among key policymakers. For instance, efforts by faith-based organizations (FBOs), humanitarian agencies, and groups such as the **Save Darfur Coalition** (which consists of nearly two hundred organizations) have been highly effective in mobilizing support and urging governments to stop the "ongoing genocide" in Sudan. The **Enough Project**—a coalition of nongovernmental organizations, FBOs, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—has similarly focused attention on genocide and crimes against humanity in Africa. However, support of the civil-society groups has also been selective and numerous high-intensity conflicts—such as in the DRC and Sri Lanka—have suffered from disengagement.

State-building and peacebuilding: *Stagnant resources, unrealistic mandates*

When the killing ends or is reduced, efforts to rebuild war-torn states and societies begin. Despite the creation of new institutions and processes, the international community's record on this front has been inadequate. According to the Center for International Development and Conflict Management's **Peace and Conflict 2012 report** [PDF], most conflicts over the past decade occurred in relapsed countries. Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan, and Afghanistan serve as somber reminders of how complex the task of postconflict reconstruction can be, particularly in cases of ongoing insurgency and political division.

Effective and comprehensive strategies are required to ensure that peace is sustainable (peacebuilding) and that capacity and legitimacy of institutions is enhanced (state-building). Strong institutions help **prevent** the recurrence of violence by providing public goods and enhancing the perceived legitimacy of institutional arrangements. However, both state-building and peacebuilding efforts suffer from similar shortcomings: complex mandates for international missions, financial and resource constraints, a lack of national ownership in the design and implementation of reconstruction and

peacebuilding efforts, and short-term commitments from donors that limit opportunities to stabilize and promote long-term economic development.

The international community has undertaken efforts to fill such gaps. In 2005 the UN created the **Peacebuilding Commission** (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office, and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to coordinate activities and mobilize resources for postconflict countries. To date, the PBC has coordinated country-assistance strategies and allocated over $100 million in direct aid for the postconflict states of Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and the Central African Republic. It remains modest in scope and mandate, however, and operates only as an advisory body. In addition, the PBC is currently limited from adding complex postconflict cases to its agenda—such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

At the same time, concerted efforts to achieve state-building objectives are sluggish in many postconflict countries. In Afghanistan, the **International Security Assistance Force** (ISAF) shifted from focusing on combat to training the Afghan National Security Forces, and plans to withdraw altogether by December 2014. Other major state-building initiatives like Haiti lack financial support in spite of donor pledges and newly created trust funds to assist reconstruction efforts.

Several international financial institutions have undertaken steps to mainstream peacebuilding and state-building support. The contribution of the **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) on this front has been mixed. Some IMF critics contend that IMF loans that come with strict austerity programs that can cause economic hardship that could trigger armed violence to break out along socioeconomic fractures. Additionally, although peacebuilding and state-building activities are not formally included within the IMF mandate, the institution is capable of influencing activities indirectly. Others view the IMF more charitably, as an organization that can help nations address structural precipitators of conflict by making loans conditional upon much-needed political and economic reform.

More recently, the **World Bank** has supported reconstruction efforts by creating a group working on states prone to or affected by conflict and establishing the **State and Peacebuilding Fund**. Created in 2007, the **Fragile and Conflict-Affected States Group** coordinates the World Bank's work in such states or zones. The State and Peacebuilding Fund has the twin objectives of improving governance and institutional performance, and supporting the reconstruction and development of countries prone to, in, or emerging from conflict. The **UN Development Program**'s (UNDP's) **Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery** also established a trust fund to mobilize resources for recovery needs.

Moreover, regional organizations have established their own financial development institutions. The **African Development Bank** (AfDB) places importance on assisting states as they transition out of

fragility through the **Fragile States Facility** enhanced engagement plan, which aims to "strengthen capacity and accountability in economic and financial governance." Two examples of AfDB intervention were in Rwanda and Mozambique, both transitioning out of a fragile, postconflict environment toward greater stability and economic prosperity. In Rwanda, AfDB is promoting economic infrastructure and enterprise development; in Mozambique, it is focusing on good governance and economic and human capital development.

There has also been a marked growth in informal ad hoc coalitions to support specific postconflict countries—commonly known as "groups of friends." The most recent example of such informal diplomatic coalitions is "Friends of Syria," which has convened three times since the beginning of the crisis in March 2011. Aiming to resolve the crisis diplomatically outside the constraints of the Security Council, the group works to engage the Syrian opposition in negotiations with the Assad regime, although to little avail thus far.

U.S. and International Armed Conflict Issues

Should the United States provide greater financial and other support for peacekeeping operations?

Yes: Proponents note that the entire budget for peacekeeping operations led by the United Nations is $7.23 billion, or less than 1 percent of global military expenditures in 2011. In addition, only 20 U.S. troops served in peacekeeping operations in 2012, with an additional 120 in police training and 10 as military observers. Appropriating the $2.2 billion in international peacekeeping requested in the FY2011 budget and having the Pentagon provide the UN and regional organizations with military support would be a cost-effective way to address U.S. international security interests for only a small fraction of the overall defense budget.

No: Critics point out that the United States already provides 27 percent of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' annual budget—**$2.2 billion** [PDF]—as well as $50 million annually for the **African Union**-led peacekeeping mission in Somalia, and the **Multinational Force and Observers** mission in the Sinai Desert between Egypt and Israel. And while U.S. troops largely do not take part in UN-commanded deployments, large numbers are involved in UN-mandated operations, particularly in Afghanistan. In addition, the United States continues its Global Peace Operations Initiative, which trains foreign military and police forces. These contributions demonstrate that the United States has accepted more than its fair share of the international peacekeeping burden. In addition, peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN Security Council may be inefficient or prove unsuccessful, wasting American taxpayer dollars.

Should the United States be engaged in state-building missions?

Yes: Poor governance structures in weak and conflict-ridden states allow terrorism and other transnational issues, like crime and disease, to prosper and spread regionally and internationally. Legitimate and effective institutions are necessary for sustained peace, and proponents argue that, as such, they are an appropriate target for U.S. foreign policy efforts. State-building provides both a cost-effective measure to ensure the future security and stability of failed and weak states, and an unparalleled opportunity for advancing U.S. national interests with regard to security, diplomacy, and cultural and humanitarian concerns. Moreover, rather than directly confronting extremism through force, state-building offers an alternative to military action and the nurturing of democratic institutions helps develop permanent bastions of cooperative states with like-minded agendas, essentially acting as a conflict-prevention tool.

No: Critics contend that state-building, rather than fostering stability, has the potential to exacerbate conflict and endanger U.S. national interests. Effective methods of state-building are not well established, and the practice depends heavily on potentially uncontrollable aspects of the local political and security environment. Exercises in state-building often prove detrimental to U.S. long-term interests, and may cause regional destabilization, provoke insurgency, and disquiet the international community. State-building is not a quick fix: patience and long-term resources are required that may not be politically palatable with regard to domestic opinion.

At the same time, state-building cannot be achieved without security, and in most cases requires a prolonged and expensive military action—exactly what advocates seek to avoid. Legitimacy in state-building operations requires multilateral support and consensus, vital factors that have been unachievable with regard to the most recent U.S. endeavors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, critics argue that not all weak or failed states present security risks to the United States, and forays into such countries would exhaust national resources at a time of severe strains on the U.S. budget.

Should the United States become party to the International Criminal Court?

Yes: Proponents contend that the **International Criminal Court** (ICC) is the only permanent international body that provides global jurisdiction over mass atrocities when other means of prosecution fail or do not exist. To ensure the continued respect for the rule of law, and solidify its moral position as a global leader in international justice efforts, the United States **should** sign and ratify the **Rome Statute** of the ICC. The United States already actively cooperates with the ICC—it attended the Kampala review conference and continues to support the 2005 referral of the Darfur case to the court, and the 2011 referral of Libya. Moreover, participation in an institution that shares the values of international law and order fits with the broader U.S. foreign policy of engagement with

international institutions. Finally, resistance to crimes of aggression is unwarranted because the United States signed an amendment that does not allow prosecution of U.S. citizens without UN Security Council referral.

No: Critics believe that granting an international court the legal authority to try U.S. citizens for crimes committed in the United States would infringe on the established purview of U.S. national courts and significantly **undermine** the U.S. Constitution. As such, ratification of the Rome Statute would require a constitutional amendment to ensure concordance with U.S. law. Moreover, the ICC would grossly interfere with U.S. sovereignty, inherently limit power to choose judges, influence the direction of trial proceedings, and thus further undermine U.S. national interests.

Can management of peace operations be shared among traditional and emerging powers?

Yes: UN peacekeeping operations already consider the input of emerging powers, including China—a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Other countries, such as India and Brazil, also provide invaluable support as major troop-contributing partners. As emerging countries grow wealthier, they should continue to increase their engagement—even financially—to meet their (informal) obligations as responsible stakeholders in the global security space. A larger group of members with capability would enlarge and diversify the resources available for conflict-management efforts.

In addition, sharing responsibilities will enhance the UN Security Council's credibility and legitimacy for conflict prevention and response. Armed conflict more often directly affects developing nations than it does the permanent members of the UN Security Council, and a more proportional participation scheme would better address the problems of countries in need of intervention. Likewise, a wider representation will allow the UN Security Council to make decisions on budgets and mandates that consider regional dynamics and shed a more analytical lens on the effectiveness of peace operations.

No: Managing UN peace operations is complex and incorporating more actors might lead to more gridlock and red tape, diminishing the effectiveness and response time for conflict management. The current format gives priority to the world's most capable and responsible actors, and adding less-capable states may confuse the UN Security Council's agenda and process. Additionally, more participants do not necessarily mean a proportionate expansion of the resource pool or heightened capabilities. Finally, emerging powers have security interests (for example, Brazil on Iran, and South Africa on Zimbabwe) distinct from those of the United States and its Western allies, and incorporating their position would undermine U.S. national interests.

Does the R2P doctrine offer a promising normative foundation for curtailing mass atrocities?

Yes: Proponents believe that the "**responsibility to protect**" (R2P) doctrine is a valuable tool for humanitarian intervention, enhancing both the international community's motivation and prospects for successful operations geared toward ending mass atrocities. Foremost, the doctrine affirms that sovereignty involves the obligation to protect a country's civilians—further asserting that a failure to protect transfers the responsibility to intervene from a national government to the international community. Without the cloak of sovereignty to hide behind, state leaders will be less likely to commit or allow atrocities within their borders. Likewise, with such a normative mandate, the international community, led by the United Nations, will have a broadly recognized basis to take action. Furthermore, the R2P concept has already been successfully engaged, with the international community responding to protect civilians during the outbreak of violence in Kenya after elections in 2008 and during civil war in Libya in 2011.

No: Staunch opponents of R2P argue that it is not the job of the United States to intervene in the problems of another sovereign nation, or to coordinate a group of states to do so. The R2P doctrine does not establish new concrete obligations under international law and therefore will not create an environment that motivates outside actors or compels national leaders to protect populations. The primary mechanism for leveraging collective action in protection under R2P continues to be the UN Security Council, limiting a supposed global responsibility to the purview of a few nations. The Security Council gridlock over Syria underscores the inefficacy of a such an approach to international intervention. Without an explicit mandate from the UN Security Council, individual countries may still be unwilling to intervene unilaterally. The doctrine also advocates swift action to prevent mass atrocities but does not expand existing mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, or facilitating action.

Recent Developments

February 2013: Civil war in Syria

Brutal suppression of nonviolent antigovernment protests sparked widespread fighting that, by the summer of 2012, engulfed Syria in a brutal civil war. Over the course of the conflict, approximately **forty thousand** Syrians have been detained, **sixty thousand** have been killed, and **more than six hundred thousand** have fled the country—many of them unarmed civilians. At the same time, the civil war is increasingly taking on a transnational dimension as violence spills across the border into Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.

In response to the escalating conflict, the Arab League suspended Syria and the UN Security Council

extended the mandate of the **UN Supervision Mission in Syria** (UNSMIS), which deployed three hundred unarmed military observers to monitor the implementation of a **peace plan** crafted by former UN special envoy Kofi Annan, who has was replaced by Lakhdar Brahimi in August 2012. However, UNSMIS has proved unable to stop the violence. Despite the steady increase in hostilities, stronger action against the Bashar al-Assad regime by the UN Security Council was blocked numerous times by Russia and China, and a stalemate persists.

However, the approach of the international community began to shift incrementally in December 2012 when the European Union and the United States **recognized** the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as a representative of Syria.

January 2013: French intervention in Mali

In early January, the French army launched aerial attacks on Islamist rebel groups in northern Mali in a unilateral attempt to halt their southward advance. Mali has been in a state of turmoil since a military coup in the capital, Bamako, in March 2012. The coup—the first in the country since 1991—was widely decried by the United States and international partners. Although the coup leaders ultimately abdicated power, Islamist militants took advantage of the power vacuum ethnic and seized control of the north.

A month later, French forces **reclaimed** most northern cities from the Islamists, with logistical and intelligence support from the United States and the European Union. However, long term concerns about the stability of Mali—and neighboring countries—after the withdrawal of French forces remain high.

December 2012: Thirteen years after independence, UN forces exit East Timor

In December 2012, the UN officially concluded its mission in East Timor, marking the end to what is widely considered to be one of the most successful UN peacekeeping missions after a long and uneven road to independence.

UN and other development agencies will remain in East Timor for the foreseeable future to continue the work of building a strong and stable state.

Following a 1999 referendum—in which the vast majority of East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia—fighting erupted between Indonesian-sponsored anti-independence Timorese militias and those advocating independence. From 1999 to 2002, the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) directly governed East Timor, ultimately handing over power to an elected

government in 2002. Following the withdrawal of UN forces in 2005, violence broke out again in 2006, prompting the return of UN peacekeepers and the deployment of an Australian-led International Stabilization Force.

November 2012: "World's worst war"

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—labeled as the "**world's worst war**" by the *New York Times* with over five million dead since World War II—resurfaced in November 2012 when M23 rebels seized Goma, the capital of North Kivu province. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda has insisted that his country is not involved, but **UN experts** have accused both the Rwandan and Ugandan governments of providing the rebels with financial, logistical and ground support. After two weeks of fighting, M23 rebels withdrew from Goma following the signing of a peace agreement in early December 2012, allowing government forces to retake the city. However, the atmosphere in eastern Congo remains tense, and the relative ease with which the rebel group overtook government forces only increased the perception of official weakness and lack of legimacy.

Options for Strengthening the Global Regime to Prevent Armed Conflict

U.S. and international action are needed to ensure that conflict-prevention, conflict-response, peacebuilding, and state-building efforts are supported and provided with ample resources. These recommendations reflect the views of **Stewart Patrick**, senior fellow and director of the International Institutions and Global Governance (IIGG) program, and **Micah Zenko**, Douglas Dillon fellow in the Center for Preventive Action.

- **Enhance global architecture for conflict prevention**
  Together, norms, institutions, regimes, operating procedures, and capacities of international organizations constitute the architecture of conflict prevention. The United States can undertake global risk-reduction initiatives by endorsing norms that promote state responsibility in the interests of peace and security, such as those in the **United Nations** (UN) Charter and the emerging norm of the responsibility to protect. In support of these norms, core global governance institutions, such as the UN, must be bolstered so that they can continue to defend essential norms through collective action, including the use of force. The United States should also work with international organizations to strengthen global crisis-prevention initiatives—such as early-warning systems, governance reform, mediation support, and electoral assistance—through sharing best practices and funding. Finally, the United States can contribute to the international management and mitigation of crises through pre-crisis capacity-building in the UN and regional organizations, as well as its preparedness to provide timely operational

support during a crisis

- **Improve UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding planning**
  United Nations (UN) peace operations suffer from poor planning in the design phase and limited implementation and enforcement on the ground. A greater focus on integrated mission planning that considers the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors is essential to strengthening the effectiveness of peace operations. Released in July 2009, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations New Horizons report offered recommendations to rectify these issues. In 2010, some of the suggestions have been **incorporated** (PDF)—namely, greater dialogue and consultation among the host of actors involved in establishing and implementing a UN field mission. However, less headway has been made in creating an accountability framework that delineates a clear division of labor between headquarters and the senior mission leaders. These parameters have to be clarified and used to ensure the long-term success of peace operations.

- **Increase budgets for UN and regional organizations**
  Lack of funding and personnel remain critical concerns for international institutions. Pressure to do more with less has increased during the global financial crisis, shrinking the funds available to the United Nations. As a consequence, officials prioritize the few countries and regions that demand immediate support, fostering a narrow and near-term focus that may neglect quieter emerging crises on the horizon. Although some institutions are expanding their capacity—the European Union dedicated funds for mediation for the first time this year—these organizations should attempt to increase their funding from within their normal budget processes. If this is difficult, the alternative solution is to turn to funding sources outside of the institution, namely voluntary contributions from sympathetic states (primarily from Western Europe, Canada, and Japan).

- **Coordinate capacity-building efforts with regional organizations**
  Presently, coordination between the various governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in capacity-building of many regional organizations is, at best, scant. For example, the United States provides assistance via private contractors to **secretariat** of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on a range of apolitical issues including mining, customs, market integration, standards, and information systems. Several other governments also work with the secretariat in Indonesia to build capacity on these and other areas. Unfortunately, all of these outside actors do not coordinate or prioritize their efforts, other than attending a monthly meeting in which several governments refuse to participate.

Within the African Union Secretariat in Ethiopia, a similar situation has unfolded, where parallel and overlapping projects are being implemented by outside groups. The willingness and capacity to share intelligence and resources will undoubtedly provide significant hurdles to any comprehensive effort; however, to ensure the maximum impact for their projects, governments and NGOs should adopt a joint capacity-building approach that promotes greater coherence and coordination.

- **Enhance early-warning and -action efforts**
  Although several regional organizations have mandates and some capacity for early-warning systems and assessment, there is no formal information-sharing even for joint political or peacekeeping missions, and only a vague idea among them of what each is doing through informal meetings. Work plans are needed to promote broader cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations that goes beyond simply building capacity and includes formally sharing timely and relevant early-warning information, analytical reporting, and best practices. Early warning must also be better integrated into the decision-making processes of states and international organizations that are committed to preventive action.

- **Clarify mandates and exit strategies**
  UN missions suffer from overstretched mandates that often cannot be achieved with the allocated resources. To ensure that resources are maximized, the UN Security Council should establish criteria for the deployment of a UN Peacekeeping mission, matching mandates to conflict circumstances. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations should work with the UN Security Council to review the mandates for existing operations and provide greater clarity so that mandates are feasible on the ground. A review of mandates should also consider a more coherent strategy toward sequencing and exiting missions, particularly from the peacekeeping stage to the peacebuilding stage.

- **Develop rapidly deployable military forces to prevent mass atrocities**
  The U.S. military maintains the world's preeminent rapidly deployable power-projection capabilities. As one notable example, the Army's 82nd Airborne-Ready Brigade can deploy as many as 3,600 troops anywhere in the world within eighteen hours notice. However, U.S. military officials demonstrate little enthusiasm for mobilizing this impressive capability to prevent or curtail ongoing mass atrocities. The U.S. military has the capabilities to intervene quickly to prevent genocide when directed by the appropriate civilian authorities, but does not have the clear national policy, doctrine, plans, and training to make that mission a Pentagon-wide priority. The Obama administration must provide specific guidance to the

military in its National Security Strategy to plan and train its rapidly deployable forces for genocide- and mass-atrocity-prevention missions.

- **Create a dedicated mediation support unit**
  American diplomatic officials called on to mediate between parties in conflict have long complained that their efforts are hampered by having little support in the way of political analyses, regional and issue-area expertise, logistics, and communications. Within the State Department's **Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations**, the Obama administration should develop a strategic vision and fund and staff a **Mediation Support Unit** that could be rapidly deployed to bolster U.S.-sponsored mediation.

  Useful lessons can be drawn from the **United Nations Department of Political Affairs Mediation Standby Team** created in 2008. Consisting of a team leader, as well as experts in constitutional arrangements, human rights and transitional justice, power sharing, and security arrangements, the team was ready to be deployed within three days for a period of up to one month to support the mediation efforts by the United Nations, regional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. In its first year, the team was deployed twenty-six times to ten countries to support ongoing mediation efforts, and conducted capacity-building seminars in thirteen countries.