

# Force, legitimacy, success, and Iraq

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Having apparently abandoned war as a device for settling their own quarrels, developed countries, in the wake of the Cold War, have had an opportunity to cooperate to deal with the two chief remaining sources of artificial or human-made death: civil war and vicious regimes. In addition, international law has evolved to allow them to do so, variously conferring legitimacy on most international policing measures even when they involve the use of military force and even when they violate the policed country's sovereignty.

Until 2003, these policing ventures had generally been successful, at least in their own terms. However, despite this general record of success, it seems unlikely that developed countries will be able to carry out such exercises with any sort of consistency or reliability. This is because they often have little interest in humanitarian problems in distant areas of the globe, because they sometimes subscribe to a misguided impression about ancient ethnic hatreds that provides them with a convenient excuse for neglect, because they have a low tolerance for casualties in such ventures, because they have an aversion to the costs and problems that attend long-term policing, because there seems to be little domestic political gain from success in policing ventures, and because they harbour something of a bias against undertakings that could be construed as aggression.

Moreover, the war upon Iraq being conducted by the United States and the United Kingdom will very likely substantially reinforce the developed world's already considerable reticence about such enterprises. Had the invasion been a success by quickly establishing an effective domestic government and by discovering banned and threatening weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and convincing links between the deposed Iraqi regime and international terrorism, the venture, despite the very considerable misgivings, even hostility, of most of the international community, would probably have been accepted as legitimate in time. By contrast, because of the essential failure of the mission in its primary goals and because of the unexpectedly massive human and economic costs of the occupation and state-building effort, the venture is unlikely to garner much in the way of international approval and, more importantly, will hardly enhance enthusiasm for similar ventures, even ones likely to be successful and far less costly.

However, there does seem to be another approach to the problems of civil war and of vicious regimes: establishing and nurturing competent and effective domestic governments, something that seems to be coming about more or less on its own. This less-noticed development could prove to be an effective, and long-term, solution to the problem.

## **The decline of international war**

Throughout history international wars have often been immediately motivated by ideology, religion, pique, aggressive impulse, military rivalry, nationalism, revenge,

economic deprivation or exuberance, and the lust for battle. But such impelling motives and passions have generally been expressed in a quest to conquer and to possess territory: 'I came, I saw, I conquered', Julius Caesar pronounced self-importantly. That sort of impetus is, in various ways, very frequently found at the core of war. Thus, notes John Vasquez, territory is 'a general underlying cause of war', and he stresses that 'of all the possible issues states can fight over, the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that issues involving territory . . . are the main ones prone to collective violence'. And 'Few interstate wars are fought without any territorial issues being involved in one way or another'.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, it would appear that a potential cure for international war would be to disallow territorial expansion by states.

The effort to do so was begun with determination in the wake of the First World War. For the most part, war ceased to be embraced as it often had been before 1914 – as supreme theatre, redemptive turmoil, a cleansing thunderstorm, or an uplifting affirmation of manhood. Now people who had often praised war and eagerly anticipated its terrible, determining convulsions found themselves appalled by it. Within half a decade, war opponents, once a derided minority, became a decided majority: everyone now seemed to be a peace advocate.<sup>2</sup>

The peacemakers of 1918, substantially convinced now that the institution of war must be controlled or eradicated, adapted several of the devices peace advocates had long been promoting, at least in part. A sort of world government, the League of Nations, was fabricated to speak for the world community and to apply moral and physical pressure on potential peace-breakers. Aggression – the expansion of international boundaries by military force – was ceremoniously outlawed, and in the League Covenant signatory states solemnly undertook for the first time in history 'to respect and preserve . . . the territorial integrity and existing political independence' of all League members.<sup>3</sup>

The Second World War, none too surprisingly, embellished this perspective. For somewhat differing reasons, the three countries that started the war had done so to conquer territory: Hitler sought living space to the east, Mussolini domination in Africa and the Balkans, the Japanese glorious empire in east and southeast Asia.

Accordingly, building on efforts conducted after the First World War, the peacemakers of 1945 declared international boundaries to be fixed, no matter how illogical or unjust some of them might seem to interested observers. And the peoples residing in the chunks of territory contained within them would be expected to establish governments which, no matter how disgusting or reprehensible, would then be dutifully admitted to a special club of 'sovereign' states known as the United

<sup>1</sup> John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 151, 293.

<sup>2</sup> On this process, see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); John Mueller, *Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the Recent Transformation of World Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), ch. 9. See also Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), pp. 101, 111, 151. A. A. Milne crisply characterised the change this way: 'In 1913, with a few exceptions we all thought war was a natural and fine thing to happen, so long as we were well prepared for it and had no doubt about coming out the victor. Now, with a few exceptions, we have lost our illusions, we are agreed that war is neither natural nor fine, and that the victor suffers from it equally with the vanquished'. *Peace with Honour* (New York: Dutton, 1935), pp. 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Zacher, 'The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force', *International Organization*, 55 (Spring 2001), pp. 219–20.

Nations. Efforts to change international frontiers by force or the threat of force were sternly declared to be unacceptable.<sup>4</sup>

Rather amazingly, this process has, for various reasons and for the most part, worked. Despite the fact that many international frontiers were in dispute, despite the fact that there remained vast colonial empires in which certain countries possessed certain other countries or proto-countries, and despite the fact that some of the largest states quickly became increasingly enmeshed in a profound ideological and military rivalry known as the Cold War, the prohibition against territorial aggression has been astoundingly successful. In the decades since 1945, reversing the experience and patterns of all recorded history, there have been very few alterations of international boundaries through force.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the only time one United Nations member tried to conquer another and to incorporate it into its own territory was when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, an act that inspired almost total condemnation in the world and one that was reversed in 1991 by military force.<sup>6</sup>

It took 100 years to extinguish slavery as a major institution in human affairs: the first notable anti-slavery protests erupted in 1788 and the last substantial slave system, that of Brazil, was dismantled in 1888. An organised political movement agitating for the elimination of war really began, or at any rate took off, in 1889 with the publication in Europe of Bertha von Suttner's best-selling potboiler, *Die Waffen Nieder!* When the Cold War ended, one hundred years later, war – at least the kind of war von Suttner was concerned about – had slumped, if not into obsolescence, at least into considerable and most notable disuse. Shattering centuries of bloody practice, the developed countries of Europe and elsewhere had substantially abandoned it as a method for dealing with their disagreements. In the history of warfare, the most interesting statistic is zero (or near-zero): the number of wars between developed states since 1945. Moreover, as Figure 1 makes clear, international war of any sort had become quite rare by 1989.

### Force, legitimacy, and intervention in the new world order

When the Cold War ended, the world entered what some were given to calling 'a new world order'. Developed countries came basically to see the world in much the same way, and there was little or no fear of war between them. Notable problems remained, of course. High among these, certainly, is managing the entry of Russia and China, the main losers of the Cold War, into the world community – a process that generally seems to be going reasonably well.

<sup>4</sup> On this process, see Zacher, 'Territorial Integrity Norm'. See also Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), p. 5; Christine Gray, *International Law and the Use of Force*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion and enumeration, see Zacher, 'Territorial Integrity Norm'. It should not be concluded that the international norm *caused* this process, however. The norm and its associated institutional structure stress peace, but they are not so much the cause of the desire for peace as its result. That is, the norm was specifically fabricated and developed because war-averse countries, noting that disputes over territory had been a major cause of international war in the past, were seeking to enforce and enshrine the norm. Its existence did not cause them to be war-averse, but rather the reverse.

<sup>6</sup> Gray, *International Law*, p. 252.

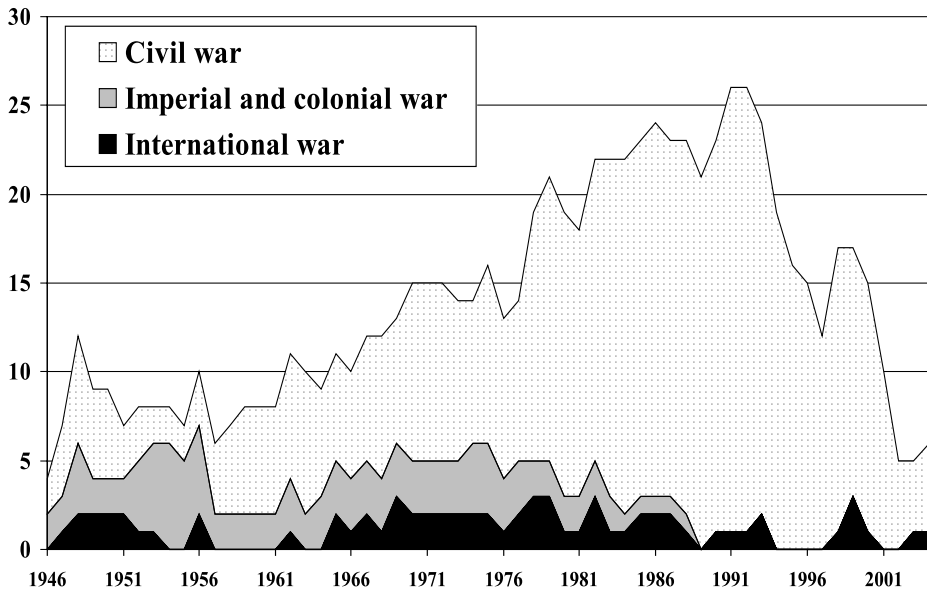


Figure 1. *Frequency of war, 1946–2004.*

*Note:* The data are for ‘wars’, violent armed conflicts which result in at least 1,000 battle deaths over the duration of the dispute for international wars, an average of at least 1,000 battle deaths per year for imperial and colonial wars, and at least 1,000 military and civilian battle-related deaths per year for civil wars.

*Source:* Kristian S. Gleditsch, ‘A Revised List of Wars Between and Within Independent States, 1861–2002’, *International Interactions*, 30 (2004), pp. 231–62, plus additional correspondence with Gleditsch.

Another central problem, more ambiguous and tentative, is the establishment of mechanisms for dealing with what remains of disorder in the new world order. Specifically, in their new era of essential consensus, the developed countries have been free to explore various devices for managing the world. Some of these devices are diplomatic, social, or economic, but the judicious application of military force is also potentially available.

It may therefore be time to go back to first principles. The problem with war, of course, is not the institution in the abstract – it does often settle differences – but rather in its consequences: the death and destruction that inevitably ensue. Although there remain places and issues over which international war could erupt, this once-perennial problem has been substantially brought under control. Nonetheless, two very notable sources of artificial or human-made death and destruction continue to exist.<sup>7</sup>

One of these is civil war. As Figure 1 makes clear, this is the chief remaining form of war. And many of these wars, some of them with considerable intervention from

<sup>7</sup> International terrorism is not included because it actually accounts (so far at least) for comparatively few deaths – apart from 2001, only a few hundred a year worldwide. Domestic terrorism can be costlier, but when it is sufficiently extensive, it is usually considered to constitute civil warfare or insurgency, not terrorism. For a discussion, see John Mueller, ‘Simplicity and Spook: Terrorism and the Dynamics of Threat Exaggeration’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 6 (May 2005), pp. 220–1.

outside governments, have been highly destructive. For example, in the late 1990s, a semi-internationalised civil war – or set of civil wars – in the Congo resulted in the deaths, by some estimates, of three million people, mostly from the starvation and disease it caused. If the death tally is accurate, that little-noticed war would be the most costly since World War II.

The second is government. In fact, over the course of the bloody twentieth century, far more people were killed by their own governments than were killed by all wars put together.<sup>8</sup> During the 1990s, for example, the government of Rwanda systematically tried to kill off a minority group resulting perhaps in upwards of half a million deaths; in North Korea at the same time, the regime so mismanaged and exacerbated famine conditions that hundreds of thousands of people died, with some careful estimates putting the number at over two million.<sup>9</sup>

In principle, the international community is ill-prepared to deal with civil conflict and with vicious or destructively incompetent domestic governments because it is chiefly set up to confront problems that transcend international borders, not ones that lurk within them. Effectively, the international community is supposed to stand aloof when governments devastate their own populations and when countries become enmeshed in catastrophic civil wars that governments either create or find themselves incapable of controlling.

However, having substantially abandoned war and armed conflict among themselves, the developed countries can, if they so desire, expand their efforts and collaborate on international police work to deal with civil war and with vicious domestic regimes. And, indeed, the Security Council of the United Nations does appear in recent years to have developed or evolved the legal ability to authorise military intervention to police civil wars or to oust a state government deemed too incompetent or too venal to be allowed to continue to exist.<sup>10</sup>

As it happens, the opportunities are considerable. Most civil warfare, though certainly not all, is readily policeable because it is chiefly perpetrated by poorly-coordinated, if often savage, thugs. Moreover, many of the most vicious governments that exist are substantially of the criminal variety, enjoy little popular support, and could readily be toppled by coordinated forces sent from outside.<sup>11</sup> This is because criminal or near-criminal forces tend to be cowardly and incompetent when confronted by effective disciplined forces. The intimidating, opportunistic thugs have been successful mainly because they are the biggest bullies on the block. However, like most bullies (and sadists and torturers), they tend not to be particularly interested in engaging a formidable opponent. Moreover, they substantially lack organisation, discipline, coherent tactics or strategy, deep motivation, broad popular support, ideological commitment, and, essentially, courage.

<sup>8</sup> Rudolph Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994); Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), ch. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), p. 215.

<sup>10</sup> Gray, *International Law*, pp. 250–1. On this issue, see also John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 81, 93n; Kofi Annan, 'Two Concepts of Sovereignty', *Economist*, 16 September 1999; Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'A Duty to Prevent', *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2004), pp. 136–41; and, 'A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility', Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004, paragraph 203.

<sup>11</sup> John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), chs. 6–7.

**Mostly success: policing by developed countries before 2003**

In fact, since the Cold War, there have been a number of instances in which developed countries have applied, or credibly threatened to apply, military force in other countries to seek to correct conditions they consider sufficiently unsuitable: in Panama in 1989, in Kuwait and Iraq in 1991, in Somalia in 1992–93, in Haiti in 1994, in Bosnia in 1995, in Kosovo and East Timor in 1999, in Sierra Leone in 2000, in Afghanistan in 2001, and in Iraq in 2003. Except for the last, they were able to engage in these ventures at remarkably little cost to themselves, particularly in casualties.

Moreover, again until the 2003 war in Iraq, these armed interventions were eventually accepted as legitimate, and (perhaps) in effect legal. In large part this seems to have been because they were successful in their own terms. Many of them were conducted under the legal umbrella of Security Council authorisation, but some of them were not – most importantly, NATO’s intervention in the civil war in Kosovo in 1999. Yet later in that year, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan extrapolated from the venture in Kosovo as well as from the UN-authorised peace mission to East Timor to argue for ‘the need for timely intervention by the international community when death and suffering are being inflicted on large numbers of people, and when the state nominally in charge is unable or unwilling to stop it’.<sup>12</sup>

*Impediments to international policing*

However, despite the fact that these ventures have mostly been successful at least in their own terms, it seems unlikely that the developed states will be able systematically to create and support mechanisms for policing civil warfare and for dealing with vicious domestic regimes. There seem to be several reasons for this.

*Lack of interest.* The dynamic of the Cold War contest caused the two sides to believe that their interests were importantly engaged almost everywhere. A central tenet of Communist ideology was that violent revolutionary conflict was pretty much inevitable and that Communist states were duty-bound to help out wherever it cropped up. Meanwhile, the Western policy of containment was based on the notion that any gain anywhere for Communism would lead to further Western losses elsewhere and thus that just about all Communist thrusts must be actively opposed.

Once this elemental contest evaporated, however, most areas of the world became substantially less important to developed countries. In the 1960s, civil war in the Congo inspired dedicated meddling by both sides; in the 1990s no one wanted to become involved very much in the complicated and hugely destructive civil war that ravaged that country.

Thus, in the wake of the Cold War, two contradictory, even paradoxical, developments took place. On the one hand, East-West and major country cooperation became far easier to arrange than before. On the other, the major countries found few trouble spots worthy of their efforts.

<sup>12</sup> Annan, ‘Two Concepts of Sovereignty’.

When active, militarised interest has been stirred, it is generally because developed countries have concluded that their own interests have become involved. Iraq and North Korea may sport regimes which are contemptible in the extreme and disasters to their own people, but the concern of the developed states has almost entirely been bound up with the fear that those countries might develop weapons which could threaten the outside world.<sup>13</sup> The United States was impelled into the Haitian morass substantially because of the politically embarrassing flow of refugees that was being created (partly by the economic sanctions it had imposed). The Australians sent policing forces to East Timor in large part because they want to live in a stable neighbourhood. In several cases – Panama, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and Iraq – developed nations became enmeshed, or self-entrapped, in part by their own previous rhetoric. But, in the meantime, tolerance of ongoing human disasters within Zimbabwe, Zambia, Congo, Sudan, Burma, and North Korea (unless that country becomes threatening to outsiders) continues.

Increased fears of international terrorism could modify this conclusion in the future because, like threatening Communist revolutionaries, terrorists can be based just about anywhere. This is, of course, what impelled the United States into military action in Afghanistan in 2001; it had not previously shown all that much concern about the destruction that country's regime was visiting upon its own people.

It is doubtful, however, that the campaign against terrorism will lead to very many similar episodes. In the future, regimes which harbour terrorists are unlikely to be so open about it while, insofar as they need bases at all, international terrorists are likely to concentrate even less than they do now. Moreover, terrorism is much more like crime than it is like warfare in its essential dynamics. Military measures may sometimes be useful, but what is mostly required is police work: intelligence gathering, staking out suspects, gathering evidence, checking and rechecking, guarding potential targets, and so on. And, like all good police work, it should be carried out selectively and with discrimination since overreaction can be counterproductive, doing more to create terrorists and terrorism than to snuff them out.

*The convenient ancient hatreds image.* Second, leaders and publics in developed states have concluded that many civil wars are essentially inexplicable all-against-all conflicts, rooted in old hatreds that could hardly be ameliorated by well-meaning, but innocent and naive, outsiders. It follows therefore that intervention would at best be simply a short-term palliative and thus a pointless exertion.

This convenient excuse for inaction seems to have emerged in the early 1990s when civil war shockingly broke out in Yugoslavia, on a continent that had been free from civil war for over 40 years. The need for an explanation, preferably a simple one, was handily supplied by pundits like the fashionable travel writer and congenial pessimist, Robert Kaplan. In a book and, probably much more importantly, in a front page article in the Sunday *New York Times Book Review* in 1993, he portentously proclaimed the Balkans to be 'a region of pure memory' where 'each

<sup>13</sup> As Francis Fukuyama has put it of the Iraq War, if the Republicans 'had gone to Congress in the autumn of 2002 asking for war powers by saying that they wanted to expend several hundred billion dollars and several thousand American lives in order to bring democracy to . . . Iraq, they would have been laughed out of court'. 'America's Parties and their Foreign Policy Masquerade', *Financial Times*, 8 March 2005, p. 21.

individual sensation and memory affects the grand movement of clashing peoples'. These processes of history and memory had been 'kept on hold' by Communism for 45 years 'thereby creating a kind of multiplier effect for violence'. With the demise of that suppressing force, he argued, ancient, seething national and ethnic hatreds were allowed spontaneously to explode into nationalist violence.<sup>14</sup>

This perspective informed some of the reluctance of the first Bush administration to become involved in Bosnia in the early 1990s and also, initially, in Somalia, and it was soon also embraced by the Clinton administration. As Brian Hall observes, 'Literary clichés do not die easily, especially when informed by superficialities'.<sup>15</sup> And they linger still.

*Low tolerance for casualties.* Third, the international community has had an extremely low tolerance for casualties in military missions that are essentially humanitarian – that is, for ventures in which clear national interests do not appear to be at stake.

This was suggested most clearly in the American and UN experience in Somalia in 1993 where the peacekeepers found their casualties to be insufficiently low given the value of the stakes. This experience led to what might be called the 'Somalia Syndrome' in the United States, and it can also be seen in the general reluctance to become involved in the fighting in Bosnia in the early 1990s despite years of the supposedly action-impelling 'CNN effect' and despite the fact that Yugoslavia is generally held to be closer to American and European interests than impoverished areas of Africa. No country was willing to send troops into combat conditions in Bosnia, though the war there did inspire an unusually large amount of public hand-wringing. Similarly, Belgium abruptly withdrew from Rwanda – and, to save face, urged others to do so as well – when ten of its policing troops were massacred and mutilated early in the genocide.<sup>16</sup> It seems clear that policing efforts in ventures considered humanitarian in nature will be politically tolerable only as long as the cost in lives for the policing forces remains extremely low – and perhaps not even then.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 'A Reader's Guide to the Balkans', *New York Times Book Review*, 18 April 1993. Later the perspective was elaborated into a cosmic worldview by Samuel Huntington under the snappy label, 'Clash of Civilizations'. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996). For a devastating early critique of the Kaplan argument, see Noel Malcolm, 'Seeing Ghosts', *National Interest*, Summer 1993, pp. 83–8. See also Mueller, *Remnants of War*, pp. 94–5, 145–6; V. P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> *The Impossible Country: A Journey Through the Last Days of Yugoslavia* (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 68. On Bosnia and Somalia, see Jon Western, 'Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the US Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia', *International Security*, 26 (Spring 2002), pp. 113, 119–21, 131–3.

<sup>16</sup> Alison Des Forges, *'Leave None to Tell the Story': Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), pp. 618–20.

<sup>17</sup> It is sometimes argued that effective cheer-leading by leaders can induce a reluctant public to accept dangerous peacekeeping missions. However, President Bill Clinton tried that at the end of 1995 as he was about to send policing troops to Bosnia, and poll data demonstrate that (in part because he confronted vocal Republican opposition on the issue) he was never able to increase the numbers of Americans who saw wisdom or value in sending the troops there even though it was expected that there would be few casualties. See John Mueller, 'American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in a New Era: Eleven Propositions', in Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), *Understanding Public Opinion* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002), p. 167.



This reluctance should not be seen as some sort of new isolationist impulse. Americans were willing, at least at the outset, to send troops to die in Korea and Vietnam, but that was because they subscribed to the containment notion holding Communism to be a genuine threat to the United States that needed to be stopped wherever it was advancing. Polls from the time make it clear they had little interest in losing American lives simply to help out the South Koreans or South Vietnamese.<sup>18</sup> Thus, an unwillingness to send troops to die for purposes that are essentially humanitarian is hardly new. Nor is the sentiment confined to armed humanitarians: if Red Cross or other workers are killed in the line of duty, their organisations frequently withdraw no matter how much good they may be doing, essentially indicating that the saving of lives is not worth the deaths of even a few of their personnel.<sup>19</sup>

As suggested earlier, policing thug-dominated conflicts and toppling thuggish regimes is not likely to be terribly difficult or costly in most cases. In Yugoslavia, for example, it might have taken a fair number of troops, perhaps over a hundred thousand, but there would most likely have been very little real fighting and most of the troops would probably not have had to stay long. And in estimates that seem to be regarded as militarily sound, the local UN commander and other experts have suggested that 5,000 well-equipped and determined soldiers with a free hand to fight could probably have rapidly halted the genocide perpetrated by murderous, rampaging, government-authorised thugs in Rwanda.<sup>20</sup>

However, it would be impossible to guarantee that such operations could be carried off with extremely few – or no – casualties. Thugs may be cowardly, but a few might fight, especially if cornered, and some might lob shells or snipe at the policing forces. And even the most criminalised forces may contain among their membership a few dedicated, even fanatical, combatants who are willing to die for the cause.

*Aversion to long-term policing.* Fourth, even though they may be successful in the first instance, developed countries often have an aversion to long-term policing, and a realistic concern about the long, unpleasant aftermath often inspires a reluctance to

<sup>18</sup> See John Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973), pp. 44, 48–9, 58, 100–1.

<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, there seems to be little political problem in keeping occupying forces in place, even in ventures deemed of little importance, as long as they are not being killed. After the Somalia fiasco of 1993, the Americans stayed on for several months and, since none were being killed, little attention was paid or concern voiced. Similarly, although there was little public or political support for sending US troops to Haiti in 1994, there was also almost no protest about keeping them there, since none were killed. At the end of 1995, Clinton told a sceptical American public that the policing troops being sent to Bosnia would only be there for a year. Although many Americans afterward came to see Clinton as a liar, this is not the instance of deception upon which they based that conclusion. In fact, there was little protest, or even much notice, that the troops were still there when the nation entered a new millennium. If they are not being killed, it scarcely matters whether the troops are in Macedonia or in Minnesota. For a broader discussion of American casualty tolerance in military ventures, see Mueller, 'American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in a New Era', pp. 156–60.

<sup>20</sup> Des Forges, 'Leave None to Tell the Story', pp. 22, 607–8. But on logistic and other potential difficulties, see Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

intervene in the first place. The frustrating experience with nation-building in Haiti after 1994 certainly would enhance this perception. And it is most impressive that the interest of the developed world in Afghanistan dropped so greatly after it no longer served as a base for international terrorists.

A contrast of the edgy tedium of Cyprus and Northern Ireland with the dramatic catastrophe of Bosnia suggests that the patient police work carried out in Nicosia and Belfast probably saved thousands of lives over the years. But it tends to be a profoundly thankless job because the people whose lives have been saved don't know who they are, and they are often critical or even contemptuous of their unappreciated saviours. Such probable ingratitude further deflates the policing enthusiasm of the international community.

*Lack of political gain from success.* Fifth, leaders probably sense that there is not much to be gained politically from ventures that are taken to be humanitarian. If George H. W. Bush achieved little lasting electoral advantage from his dramatic victory in the Gulf War of 1991 where important interests were, or seemed to be, at stake, lesser accomplishments have been at least as unrewarding. Clinton found that the more purely humanitarian (and costless) intervention in Bosnia of 1995 scarcely helped in his re-election efforts a year later – by the time the election came around, people could scarcely remember the venture. Similarly, at the time of the Kosovo bombings of 1999, press accounts argued that the presidential ambitions and political future of Clinton's vice president, Al Gore, hung in the balance. From the standpoint of public opinion, the Kosovo venture seems to have been a success, but when he launched his campaign for the presidency a few months later, Gore scarcely thought it important or memorable enough to bring up.<sup>21</sup>

*The bias against war and aggression.* Finally, for effective international policing to become standard practice, it would be necessary for the international community explicitly, clearly, and systematically to abandon or reinterpret the concept of sovereignty, and there seems to be a notable reluctance to do so. That is, it seems unlikely that the biases against aggression and war and in favour of sovereignty so carefully and deeply cultivated in the developed world and elsewhere over the last century can be adequately overcome except in special cases. Moreover, some members with vetoes in the United Nations are wary of the precedent. Thus, Russia, with its civil war in Chechnya, and China, with secessionist movements in its west, were notably unenthusiastic about sanctifying the NATO venture to aid secessionists in Kosovo in 1999.

<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, this lack of attention also means that, if things go wrong – at least in low-valued ventures – troops can be readily removed with little concern about saving face or about longer political consequences. For example, the abrupt combat deaths of US soldiers in Somalia in 1993 enhanced demands for withdrawal, not calls to revenge the humiliation, and by the time the 1996 election rolled around, the public had substantially forgotten about the fiasco. Similarly, Ronald Reagan's withdrawal of American policing troops from Lebanon after a terrorist bomb had killed over 200 of them in 1983 scarcely dampened his re-election success a year later. However, the fact that failure does not necessarily bring politicians disaster hardly compensates for the fact that there is no political gain from success.

## Mostly failure: the policing war in Iraq

These impediments to international policing are likely to be considerably enhanced by the experience of the Americans and the British in Iraq, the first real failure in the policing process.

The winner of the 2000 presidential election in the United States, George W. Bush, came into office suggesting that the United States ought to develop a 'humble' foreign policy, and, along with some of his foreign policy advisers, such as Condoleezza Rice, he reflected the Somalia Syndrome by expressing an aversion to 'nation-building'.<sup>22</sup> However, after international terrorists shockingly flew airliners into New York's World Trade Center and Washington's Pentagon on 11 September 2001, Bush instantly shucked off that perspective and proclaimed that he was taking on the distinctly unhumane responsibility to 'rid the world of evil'.<sup>23</sup>

The first stage of that campaign was to intervene very forcefully in an ongoing civil war in Afghanistan in an effort to attack a group of international terrorists based in that country. The American venture – essentially an act of naked aggression – enjoyed a considerable amount of international support. It also proved to be remarkably successful and was unexpectedly easy. In the wake of the war, a new, rather broadly based government was set up, and an expensive, trouble-plagued nation-building effort was begun that was far greater than anything ever contemplated for Somalia.

Encouraged by the easy success in Afghanistan, the Bush administration now set its sights on the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. It was reasonable to expect that a conventional military invasion by a disciplined foreign army could eliminate the regime, and it seemed entirely possible that Iraq's ill-led and demoralised army, which fought almost not at all when challenged in the 1991 Gulf War, would put up little armed resistance to such an attack.<sup>24</sup> There were efforts to tie Iraq to international terrorism, and fears that the dictatorial and unstable Saddam could develop weapons of mass destruction remained high, now embellished by the argument that he might palm them off for dedicated terrorists to explode in distant lands. These arguments enjoyed quite a bit of support with the American public and Congress, still reeling from the September 11th attacks. They generated much less backing abroad, however, and, although it tried, the American administration was never able to get a resolution of support from any international body. The leaders of most countries, including those bordering Iraq, never seemed to see that country as nearly as much of a threat as did the distant United States and its only notable ally on the issue, Tony Blair's United Kingdom.

Determined to see it out, Bush and Blair shrugged off international disapproval, fabricated a rather small and personalised 'coalition of the willing', and launched

<sup>22</sup> See, in particular, Rice's 'Promoting the National Interest', in the January/February 2000 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, in which she observes that 'the military is a special instrument. It is lethal, and is meant to be. It is not a civilian police force. It is not a political referee. And it is most certainly not designed to build a civilian society. . . . Using the American armed forces as the world's "911" will degrade capabilities, bog soldiers down in peacekeeping roles, and fuel concern among other great powers that the United States has decided to enforce notions of "limited sovereignty" worldwide in the name of humanitarianism' (pp. 53–4).

<sup>23</sup> Memorial Service speech at the National Cathedral, 14 September 2001.

<sup>24</sup> On the pathetic capacities of the Iraq army in 1991, see John Mueller, 'The Perfect Enemy: Assessing the Gulf War', *Security Studies*, 5 (Autumn 1995), pp. 77–117.

naked aggression against Iraq in which forces from the United States and Britain were joined by some from Australia. As expected, the Iraqi military disintegrated under the onslaught and seems to have lacked any semblance of a coherent strategy of resistance.

The invaders had quickly and easily toppled a regime held in wide contempt – though not much urgent fear – around the world. But to have the mission accepted as a success, the invaders would have had to establish quickly a stable, acceptable, effective, moderate government there, and it would have been highly desirable as well to uncover convincing links between the Iraqi regime and global terrorism while seizing sizeable caches of the much touted weapons of mass destruction that they expected to find. With success, the venture likely would eventually have achieved a considerable degree of (probably somewhat grudging) international legitimacy, and it might ultimately have been accepted as legal – rather in the manner of NATO's successful naked aggression against sovereign Serbia in 1999 or America's successful naked aggression against sovereign Panama in 1989 or against sovereign Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>25</sup> Neither convincing terrorist links nor WMD were found in Iraq, however, and efforts to establish quickly an effective, acceptable government there failed utterly.

As it happened, the foreign occupiers soon found that they were stretched thin in their efforts to rebuild a nation out of the rubble that remained after Saddam, American- and British-enforced international economic sanctions, and the war had taken their toll. It had been hoped that the Iraqis would greet the conquerors by dancing happily in the streets and somehow coordinate themselves into a coherent and appreciative government, rather as in the previous ventures in Panama and East Timor and maybe in Bosnia and Kosovo. But, although many were glad to see Saddam's tyranny ended, the invaders often found the population resentful and humiliated, rather than gleeful and grateful. Moreover, bringing order to the situation was vastly complicated by the fact that the government-toppling invasion had effectively created a failed state which permitted widespread criminality and looting. In addition some people – including some foreign terrorists drawn opportunistically to the area – were dedicated to sabotaging the victors' peace and to killing the policing forces. Shunned by the Bush administration and bemused (or relieved) by the debacle (the mission mostly inspired *schadenfreude*, without all that much in the way of *schaden*), the international community was not eager to join in the monumental reconstruction effort.

In September 2004, a year and a half after the invasion – after it had become abundantly clear that no WMD or terrorist links were likely to be found, and after the United States and the United Kingdom had become embedded in a military quagmire of occupation – United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan labelled the invasion 'illegal' in a BBC interview.<sup>26</sup> It seems highly unlikely that he would have reached such a blunt, forceful conclusion if the invasion had been successful.

<sup>25</sup> For such anticipations as the war was launched, see Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'Good Reasons for Going Around the UN', *New York Times*, 18 March 2003, p. A33. Relatedly, America's naked aggression against Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 might eventually have inspired acceptance and even approval in the non-Communist world if the escapade had been able tidily to topple the Castro regime, even as American acts of war against Cuba and the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 become accepted, even lauded, after that venture proved successful.

<sup>26</sup> ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3661134.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3661134.stm)).

As in Somalia and particularly Vietnam, it is difficult to see how the insurgents in Iraq can be defeated at a tolerable cost in American and British lives: the insurgents are variously motivated, but they are likely, despite tactical setbacks, to be willing and able to continue their activities at least until the hated invaders leave. Accordingly, policy in Iraq seems to be evolving in a manner familiar from Vietnam and Somalia: a combination of cut, run, and hope. Responsibility for policing the resistance is increasingly being handed over to a shaky, patched-together government, army, and police force; American tactics seem to be in the process of being shifted to reduce its casualties and its troops will probably gradually begin to be removed; and support for the locals will increasingly be limited to economic aid and encouraging words. However, even an orderly retreat from Iraq will likely be taken by international terrorists as a great victory (even greater than the one against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan or the one against Israel in southern Lebanon) and therefore highly encouraging.<sup>27</sup>

The removal of Saddam Hussein's regime remains an achievement. However, military victory was achieved at the cost of creating enervating chaos in the country, killing tens of thousands of Iraqis, and alienating many of the rest.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, without an effective army or impressive weapons, the notion that Iraq ever posed much of a threat (particularly a 'grave and gathering' one) to anyone, even Israel, becomes highly questionable. In addition, oil supplies from the country are likely to remain uncertain for years, and international animosity to the United States generated by the venture remains high. Finally, any sort of democracy that emerges in Iraq may well lead to the certification of candidates who are hostile to the United States and to Israel.<sup>29</sup>

### Force and legitimacy after the Iraq War

There are likely to be important international consequences of the Iraq experience. In particular, it will probably change American foreign policy and further deflate the already limited willingness of developed states to apply military force to police the world.

Among the casualties for American policy could be the Bush Doctrine, empire, unilateralism, pre-emption (or, actually, preventive war), last-remaining-superpowerdom, and indispensable-nationhood. Indeed, what seems to be emerging from this experience in the United States is something that will probably come to be called 'the Iraq Syndrome'. 'No more Vietnams' and 'No more Somalias' will be replaced, or updated, by 'No more Iraqs'.

<sup>27</sup> For discussion on this point, see John Mueller, 'The Politics of Cutting and Running', *History News Network*, 24 May 2004 (<http://hnn.us/articles/5324.html>). See also Daniel Byman, 'How to Fight Terror', *National Interest*, Spring 2005, pp. 125–7.

<sup>28</sup> For assessments of a study published in *Lancet* estimating that the war was responsible for the deaths of 100,000 Iraqis in its first 18 months alone, see the *Economist*, 6–12 November 2004, pp. 12, 81–2. That number would be vastly higher than the sum of all people who have been killed by international terrorists over the last hundred years.

<sup>29</sup> For a perspective on democracy that contrasts markedly with the democratic romanticism promulgated by many of the war's advocates, see John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Specifically, there will probably be notable decreases in the acceptance of a number of beliefs. Among these are the notions that the United States should take unilateral military action to correct situations or regimes it considers reprehensible but which present no very direct and very immediate threat to it, that it should and can forcibly bring democracy to nations not now so blessed, that it has the duty to bring order to the Middle East, that having by far the largest defence budget in the world is necessary and mostly brings benefits, that international cooperation is of only very limited value, and that Europeans and other well-meaning foreigners are naive and decadent wimps. There may also be new pressures to reduce the military budget, and the country is more likely to seek international cooperation, possibly even sometimes showing perceptible signs of humility.

The chief beneficiaries of the Iraq War are likely to be the rogue/axis-of-evil states of Iran and North Korea. In part because of the American military and financial overextension in Iraq (and Afghanistan), the likelihood of any coherent application of military action or even of focused military threat against these two unpleasant entities has substantially diminished,<sup>30</sup> as it has against what at one time seemed to be the next dominoes in the Middle East: Syria especially, as well as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Lebanon. The Iraq Syndrome suggests that any intelligence suggesting such states have become threatening will be deeply questioned, that any moves to apply military force to them will be met with widespread dismay and opposition unless there is severe provocation, and that any additional persecution by such regimes of their own people will be wistfully tolerated and ignored.

More broadly, developed states will probably become even more sensitive about intervening when their own national interests fail clearly to be engaged, and, moreover, they are likely to adopt more stringent standards for determining when such interests are engaged. They also may come to embrace even more the ancient ethnic hatreds dodge, concluding that any efforts they are likely to make will essentially prove futile in the long run. They are likely as well to become even more sensitive about suffering casualties, and to see even less political benefit in such ventures – although Bush was re-elected in 2004, virtually all observers think that his near-defeat was due primarily to the mess in Iraq and that, without that war, he would have done much better. Their ideological and emotional disinclinations against war, against the application of armed force, and against even well-meaning aggression are likely to be further reified. And, in particular, their wary aversion to long-term policing is surely going to be enhanced by the costly and bloody post-invasion experience in Iraq (and, to a lesser extent, in Afghanistan).

Some of this could be seen during the Iraq War itself. In 2003, crowds of desperate Liberian civilians unsuccessfully begged the international community, including especially the United States, forcefully to intervene to liberate them from their resident dictator, Charles Taylor, and from the armed thugs who were seeking to depose him. And, even worse, when depredations by government-inspired armed bands caused ethnic cleansing and tens of thousands of deaths in western Sudan ('genocide', some called it), the international community, after ten years of *mea culpa* breast-beating over its failure to intervene in Rwanda, responded with little more

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Ronald Brownstein, 'Count Bush's Doctrine of Preemption as a Casualty of the Iraq War', *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 2004. George Will, 'The Iran Dilemma', *Washington Post*, 23 September 2004, p. A29.

than huffing and puffing, pressure on the Sudan government, and the setting up of inadequate and underfunded refugee camps.<sup>31</sup>

It could also be seen in post-invasion policy toward North Korea. In 1994, the United States seems to have been just about ready to go to war on the peninsula spurred by a contested intelligence conclusion that there was 'a better than even' chance that North Korea had the makings of a small nuclear bomb.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, when that country abruptly declared in February 2005 that it now actually possessed nuclear weapons, the announcement was officially characterised as 'unfortunate' and as 'rhetoric we've heard before'.<sup>33</sup>

### **The solution: effective domestic government**

It seems, then, that even though they are fully capable of doing it, developed states are likely to intervene with any sort of reliability, either by themselves or through international bodies, only when their interests seem importantly engaged or where they manage to become self-entrapped. And they are likely even then to do so with enormous concern about suffering too many casualties of their own and with a studied wariness about long-term policing commitments. Moreover, the British-American mess in Iraq is likely substantially to reinforce this reticence.

The attention of countries in the developed world may be arrested from time to time by international terrorism, the threatening dispersion of weapons of mass destruction to what are sometimes called 'rogue states', the flow of illegal drugs to their own populations, and refugee incursions that cause them trouble and cost them money. But for the most part, they are more likely to continue to see most civil conflicts and vicious regimes as essentially irrelevant to their interests and thus to remain aloof.

International bodies and consortiums of developed countries can often be useful to broker cease-fires and peace settlements, and they can sometimes assist with humanitarian aid and economic and political development once peace has been achieved. Thus, for example, violent conflict in Cyprus has probably been averted by the international community's very long-term intervention there, Bosnia and Kosovo may be settling down under international tutelage, Cambodia is better off thanks in considerable part to missions from the outside.

However, it seems clear that a truly effective solution to the problems presented by civil warfare and vicious regimes does not lie in the fabrication of effective and legitimate international policing forces, but rather in the establishment of competent domestic military and policing forces, tracing the state-building process Europe went through in the middle of the last millennium. And, remarkably, this process may be well underway.

To a very substantial degree, much of the civil warfare that persists in the world today is a function of the extent to which inadequate governments exist.<sup>34</sup> Civil wars

<sup>31</sup> Scott Straus, 'Darfur and the Genocide Debate', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2005, pp. 123–46.

<sup>32</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 307–8, 316.

<sup>33</sup> Sonni Efron and Bruce Wallace, 'North Korea Escalates Its Nuclear Threat', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 2005, p. A1.

<sup>34</sup> For an extended development of this point, see Mueller, *Remnants of War*, ch. 9.

are least likely to occur in stable democracies and in stable autocracies – that is, in countries with effective governments and policing forces.<sup>35</sup> Stable democracies, almost by definition, have effective policing forces, and they deal with grievance by bringing the aggrieved into the process (as long as it is expressed peacefully) and by listening to the grievance. Stable autocracies also have capable policing forces – in fact, they are often called ‘police states’. They rule through the selective, but persistent, application of terror – through vigilant domestic spying and through effective, if often brutal, suppression. North Korea and Cuba provide contemporary examples. In fact, in an important sense many civil wars have effectively been *caused* by inept governments. Because of closed political systems and because of policing methods in which excessive and indiscriminate force is employed to try to deal with relatively small bands of troublemakers, inept governments can turn friendly or indifferent people into hostile ones and vastly increase the size of the problems they are trying to deal with. As David Keen has observed, ‘the aggression of counter-insurgency forces has repeatedly alienated their potential civilian supporters, and this has often continued even when evidently counter-productive from a military point of view’.<sup>36</sup>

It appears that the trends in civil warfare as documented in Figure 1 track rather well with the existence of weak governments.<sup>37</sup> With the decolonisation of the late 1950s and 1960s, a group of poorly-governed societies came into being, and many found themselves having to deal with civil warfare. Moreover, as civil wars become criminal enterprises, they tended to become longer and to accumulate in number. This pattern may have been embellished by another phenomenon, democratisation, which often is accompanied by a period in which governments become weak.<sup>38</sup> Then, in the aftermath of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there was a further increase in the number of incompetent governments as weak, confused, ill-directed, and sometimes criminal governments emerged in many of the post-Communist countries replacing comparatively competent police states. In addition, with the end of the Cold War, the developed countries no longer had nearly as much interest in

<sup>35</sup> Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch, ‘Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992’, *American Political Science Review*, 95 (March 2001), pp. 33–48. On this point, see also Bruce M. Russett and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 70; Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict, 2003: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2003), pp. 19–20, 25; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’, *American Political Science Review*, 97 (February 2003), pp. 85, 88.

<sup>36</sup> *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 320 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), p. 21. Developments in western Sudan are only the most recent case in point. See Straus, ‘Darfur and the Genocide Debate’, pp. 124–8.

<sup>37</sup> For similar trends using different definitions of war and of armed conflict, see Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallenstein, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Stollenberg, and Håvard Strand, ‘Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 35 (September 2002), pp. 621; Marshall and Gurr, *Peace and Conflict*, pp. 12–14; Klaus Jürgen Gantzel and Torsten Schwinghammer, *Warfare Since the Second World War* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction, 2000), pp. 112, 170; Fearon and Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’, pp. 77–8; ‘The global menace of local strife’, *Economist*, 22 May 2003.

<sup>38</sup> See also Paul Collier, ‘Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective’, in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, eds. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), pp. 98, 108; Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2000).



financially propping up some third world governments and in helping them police themselves – an effect particularly noticeable in Africa.<sup>39</sup> By the mid-1990s, however, a large number of countries had managed to get through the rough period and had achieved a considerable degree of democratic stability – especially in Latin America, post-Communist Europe, and east and southeast Asia – and relatively effective governments had emerged in most of them. As a result, the amount of civil warfare declined markedly.

The essential solution – and a longterm one – to the problems of civil warfare, then, seems to lie not in ministrations by the international community – so often half-hearted, half-vast, and half-coherent – but rather in the establishment of competent domestic governments in the many places that do not now have them. Sometimes international authorities, working out of or under the direction of the developed countries, have been able to aid or speed the process. And they can certainly be of assistance when a country sincerely desires to develop the kind of competent military and police forces that have helped bring peace and prosperity to the developed world.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the example of the developed societies – civil, prosperous, flexible, productive, and free from organised violent conflict – can be most attractive, as indicated by the masses of people from the developing world who are trying to immigrate there, abandoning in fear and disgust the turmoil and violence of their home countries. However, it is likely that exercises in nation-building that are productive of peace and order will have to be accomplished – and, ultimately, with results that are most likely to be lasting – by forces that are domestic.

Over the course of the last few decades there seems to have been a decline of tyranny and an increase in the number of countries led by effective people who, instead of looting and dissipating their country's resources, seem to be dedicated to adopting policies that will further its orderly development. This has happened in almost all of Latin America as well as in many places in Asia – areas that, not coincidentally, have also experienced a considerable decline of warfare. Whether Africa will follow that pattern is yet to be determined, but there are at least some hopeful signs.<sup>41</sup>

Criminality and criminal predation will still exist, and so will terrorism which, like crime, can be carried out by individuals or very small groups. And there will certainly be plenty of other problems to worry about – famine, disease, malnutrition, pollution, corruption, poverty, politics, and economic travail. However, while far from certain, a further (or continuing) decline in civil warfare and in the number of countries with vicious governments does seem to be an entirely reasonable prospect. The international community is needed, and likely, to play only a supporting role – and international force, whether deemed legitimate or not, very little at all – in this highly-desirable development.

<sup>39</sup> Keen, *Economic Functions of Violence*, p. 23; Gray, *International Law*, pp. 215–17; Robert H. Bates, *Prosperity and Violence* (New York: Norton, 2001), ch. 5.

<sup>40</sup> See Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report 2005* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Robert Rotberg, 'New Breed of African Leader', *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 January 2002, p. 9.