Editors' Introduction

J. PETER BURGESS & ROBERT PIPER*

Security Dialogue & United Nations Development Programme

ON 14 DECEMBER 2004, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change presented its report *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (United Nations, 2004) to UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan. The report stemmed from a mandate issued by the Secretary-General one year earlier and provoked debate in academic and operational sectors even before its release. The report's broad approach is twofold. First, it sketches a picture of global security in which the classical modern nation-state security categories are challenged by a new constellation of global threats. Second, in an effort to address these new challenges, it reformulates the notions of responsibility and obligation in the international system in terms of the nation-state and the international community, and most concretely the United Nations itself. Debate is thus articulated across two axes, both concerning the character of new security threats and the tools and normative aims implied in addressing them.

Through its 101 recommendations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* unites a wide range of perspectives and presuppositions. These can be summarized into four distinct areas:

First, it assesses the new global security landscape and attempts to correlate this with present collective security systems. Poverty, health epidemics, environmental risk, nuclear proliferation, transnational organized crime and, not least, the threat of international terrorism have combined to create a composite image of insecurity that stretches beyond national borders. The report makes the case for the 'indivisibility of security, economic development and human freedom' (United Nations, 2004: 1) and calls for a 'new consensus' around these principles. But, how accurate is this picture? To what degree is it real, and to what degree imagined? In what sense is there one common security picture across national cultures, from north to south, east to west?

Second, the report reopens the question of the relation between the nation-state, sovereignty and responsibility. The prospect of a transnational security landscape naturally engenders a new role for the nation-state built, more than ever before, on shared responsibilities. On the one hand, how one state manages the new security challenges of our time domestically has far-reaching consequences for other states. On the other hand, individual nation-states are no longer able to confront these challenges alone, without international cooperation. The report also explicitly endorses an 'emerging norm' on the right – even obligation – of the international community to intervene where sovereign states have proven either unable or unwilling to protect their citizens from 'avoidable catastrophe' (United Nations, 2004: 65). What are the implica-

SECURITY DIALOGUE

tions of this new ethical claim for nation-states? What responsibilities do they rightly have in the new global reality?

Third, the report reaffirms the importance of prevention. It underlines the high moral, financial and political costs of failing to prevent the emergence of threats to international security in the first place, and the inconsistent record of the Security Council in its response to date. The High-Level Panel's report exhorts the developed world in particular to respond with 'more resources and action' in achieving the Millennium Development Goals as an essential preventive measure, as well as identifying a host of other preventive measures across the spectrum of threats identified. A new 'Peacebuilding Commission' is proposed to, inter alia, watch for states 'sliding towards state collapse' (United Nations, 2004: 83). But, what are the prospects of this report being more successful than previous attempts in ushering in the much-vaunted 'culture of prevention'? How will governments respond to this unapologetically inter-dependent approach to prevention?

Fourth, it analyses and provides recommendations on the relationship between force, legitimacy and the role of the UN. While the report opens for a radical change in the limits of the right of intervention on humanitarian grounds, it does not open for any radical rewriting or re-interpretation of Article 51 to allow for preventive use of force without Security Council endorsement. The report calls for a more proactive Security Council none-theless, and joins a long line of efforts call-ing for reforms in its membership. Explicit criteria for the legitimate use of force and a revamped human rights commission are just a few of the many recommendations contained in the report, addressing the UN's legitimacy and instruments for maintaining collective security and protecting a 'precious but not yet deep-rooted' emerging norm of states seeking sanction for the use of force (United Nations, 2004: 32).

Together with the Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 8 September 2000, *A More Secure World* serves as the basis for the recommendations presented by Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2005) as a package of policy commitments and institutional reforms in his March 2005 report *In Larger Freedom: Toward Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. Annan's report assembles a comprehensive strategy for tackling poverty, security threats and human rights abuses while overhauling the United Nations through a set of recommendations slated for action by national leaders gathered at the UN's 60th anniversary later this year. Many of the contributors to this symposium thus refer to both texts, regarding the High-Level Panel report as a more investigative side and *In Larger Freedom* as the more operational side of a more or less unified strategic process.

In order to gain a critical overview of this debate, *Security Dialogue* is pleased to publish a symposium of articles on the report of the High-Level Panel.

* J. Peter Burgess is Research Professor and leader of the Security Programme at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), and editor of *Security Dialogue.* Robert Piper has served with the United Nations for 16 years and is currently Chief of Staff for the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former US President Bill Clinton.

REFERENCES

Annan, Kofi A., 2005. *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, A/59/2005. New York: United Nations.

United Nations, 2004. *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility,* Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, A/59/565. New York: United Nations.