The UN’s role in historical context: impact of structural tensions and thresholds

The UN’s response to intra-state conflicts did not take shape in a vacuum. International normative preferences which had an impact on active UN involvement in intra-state conflicts drew their inspiration from and interacted with the international political milieu. No doubt the wider historical context in which the UN had to operate underwent constant change, as did the UN itself. The present chapter reviews, with the benefit of historical structural insights, the evolving international context in the aftermath of World War II. The purpose of recalling this well known historical record here is to discern the most significant ‘material’ and ‘ideational’ configurations that evolved in connection with the UN as an ‘institution’ and impacted on the behaviour of and prescriptions for the UN as an actor. This chapter does not directly address UN involvement in intra-state conflicts the way subsequent chapters do, but it seeks to perform an equally critical task. It situates, that is, it gives meaning to, our detailed and more specific explorations in the following chapters. Above all, it establishes that the early 1960s and the early 1990s were critical junctures in post-1945 world politics, each reflecting different power and value configurations.

A quick examination of the period since World War II suggests that two patterns of global conflict were especially significant for the UN’s evolution. The first, situated along the East–West divide, is commonly known as the Cold War. The second involves the confrontation between North and South, which is less easily captured by any single phrase. While the East–West divide rested on strategic and ideological bipolarity, the precise nature of the North–South divide was less clear. What is designated as the ‘North’ comprises mainly industrialised liberal/capitalist countries (geographically located for the most part in the northern hemisphere), many of which had an imperial past. The ‘South’, on the other hand, refers to a large number of poorer countries, most of which had experienced colonial occupation. As with the East–West tension,
the North–South confrontation would decisively impact on the UN’s evolving role in world politics.

Neither the East–West nor the North–South confrontation is easy to depict in a few paragraphs, especially if they are to illuminate such a complex phenomenon as the UN’s relationship to intra-state conflicts. At the risk of oversimplification, we will provide no more than a cursory account of the post-1945 period, with the emphasis on how the two global conflicts manifested themselves as part of the structural evolution of the international system, which both constrained and facilitated the relationship between international actors and the UN.

Towards double ‘peaks’: superpower rivalry and decolonisation/non-alignment

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the arrangements for a new world order reflected a multipolar power configuration, the embodiment of which can be found in the Security Council. In economic terms, the United States was clearly the dominant source of power. Yet politically, the colonial powers, the Soviet Union and China had to be reckoned with. The main preoccupation of war-wary actors was maintenance of international peace and security. Protection of and respect for state sovereignty, and prevention of acts of aggression signified the most important ideational aspect of the new world order. The holocaust did no doubt preoccupy the minds of many, but the German and Japanese aggression in Europe and elsewhere was arguably more important for the major powers, which had been directly subjected to aggression and not to holocaust. The Charter, then, inescapably reflected a particular blend of value preferences which corresponded to the material and ideational characteristics of the international context. Before long, profound changes would impact on the political landscape.

Emergence and escalation of the East–West conflict (1945–62)

The ‘Cold War’ was a conflict prosecuted by the United States and the Soviet Union, whose spheres of influence were separated by an imaginary ‘Iron Curtain’. The emergence of the Cold War was a landmark event in several respects: first and most obvious was the beginning of the transition from a multipolar to a bipolar world. Secondly, for the first time in history, an ordering principle encompassed the entire world. There was virtually no corner of the world that did not define itself with reference to the Cold War. Thirdly, the two poles of the new system were not merely ‘great’ powers. They were ‘superpowers’ with nuclear capabilities and a truly global reach. As we shall see, all three characteristics would constrain the role envisaged for the UN in world politics.
The period between 1945 and 1962 saw the emergence and step-by-step escalation of the worldwide ideological and strategic confrontation between the two superpowers. The expansion of their spheres of influence and the formation of their respective power ‘blocs’ became distinguishing characteristics of the period. Immediately after the war, a number of significant events signalled the onset of tension. In 1947, the Truman Doctrine, the domino theory, the rise of McCarthyism and the Marshall Plan paved the way for the first major geopolitical confrontation: the 1948 Berlin crisis. Although a war was barely averted, the crisis added to the intensification of the Cold War. The following year, NATO would be created to counter the perceived Soviet threat.4

The end of the Chinese civil war, coupled with NATO’s creation, would gradually contribute to the process of escalation. The scope of East–West tension had now extended beyond European borders. Although, strategically, Sino-Soviet relations would drastically deteriorate in due course,5 western perception of the ‘communist threat’ had no doubt considerably increased following Mao’s take-over. Soon after came the formation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).6 The communist powers, already reasonably unified ideologically, were also beginning to organise themselves economically if not yet militarily. Before long, however, would come signs of increasing Soviet military strength – the first Soviet atomic bomb was detonated on 29 August 1949.

Given Stalin’s prominence in the development of the Cold War, his death in 1953 might have been expected to slow down the escalation of East–West tension. This did not turn out to be the case. By then, the Cold War had developed its own logic and dynamic. In 1954, the Soviet Union tested its hydrogen bomb. The same year, the United States coerced the members of the OAS to adopt the Caracas Declaration, condemning communist efforts to gain control in any American state.7 Between 1954 and 1955 the two blocs further expanded. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)8 and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)9 joined NATO to form a western security umbrella.10 This ‘capitalist encirclement’ (to quote the Soviet view) was finally counterbalanced by the formation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955.11 After Khrushchev’s rise to power, the Soviet Union launched, in August–October 1957, the world’s first inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) and the first earth satellite, Sputnik.12 By November 1959, Khrushchev would declare that the Soviet Union had stockpiled enough rockets to wipe all its probable enemies from the face of the earth.13

In 1958 the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) represented a major advance on the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The idea of European integration was becoming ever more concrete. Adoption of a ‘capitalist’ model of development and political integration in
Western Europe was certainly of vital concern to the Soviet bloc. It concerned the United States as well, since an integrated Europe might increasingly distance itself from its trans-Atlantic ally, especially given that the driving force behind such integration was the former enemy, Germany, and de Gaulle’s uncooperative France.\textsuperscript{14}

In the early 1960s the Cold War reached its climax. Formal relations were established in 1960 between Castro’s revolutionary Cuba (just a few miles from Florida) and the Soviet Union. The same year an American U–2 spy plane was shot down in the Soviet territory. Meanwhile, in 1961 the Berlin Wall was built. A concrete embodiment of the imaginary Iron Curtain was now in place. The same year, the US attempt to overthrow Castro in the famous Bay of Pigs expedition ended in failure. In 1962, the East–West confrontation had virtually reached its peak with the Cuban missile crisis, which brought the world within a whisker of a full-scale nuclear war.

\textit{Emergence of the contemporary North–South conflict (1955–64)}

The struggle between rich and poor countries, to put it crudely, has deep historical roots. The North–South conflict is in this sense much older than the East–West conflict. A politically organised ‘South’, however, did not emerge until after World War II. The 1950s witnessed a conceptual breakthrough in policy and academic circles alike, whereby the multi-dimensional divide between rich and poor countries began to be considered a worldwide phenomenon.\textsuperscript{15} The precise nature of the relationship between these two loosely identified groups of countries or coalitions was the subject of intense debate, but there was little doubt that North and South stood in opposition to each other.\textsuperscript{16}

The contemporary North–South conflict, as we use the term, came into being in the mid-1950s when the South began to organise itself politically. In its initial period, the conflict had two major manifestations: decolonisation and non-alignment. The significant point in relation to both is that during this early phase the South defined itself \textit{vis-à-vis} the North primarily in ‘negative’ terms. In other words, the southern countries stipulated what they were \textit{not} and what they were \textit{against}, rather than what they \textit{were} and what they were \textit{for}.\textsuperscript{17} Yet they asserted their position with such strength and venom that their messages carried almost the same weight on the world political stage as those of the Cold War protagonists. In the transition from multipolarity to bipolarity, the South took its place alongside the western and socialist camps as a third, yet looser, ‘bloc’.

\textit{Politics of decolonisation}

Although decolonisation was not a recent phenomenon, the largest ‘waves’ of decolonisation were seen in the twentieth century, following World Wars I
and II. 1955–65 was by far the most active period in the history of decolonisation, with forty-seven new states emerging during this ‘decolonisation decade’. The impact of the radical transition from colonialism to post-colonialism was twofold: it changed the way the (neo)colonial powers exercised influence over (ex-)colonies; but equally importantly, it provided the South with a unifying concept during the period of decolonisation.

The first dimension of the transition to post-colonialism involved the continued ambitions of great powers and business interests in relation to (ex-)colonies. Britain and France particularly, but also the other colonial powers, were intent on maintaining their influence over their former colonies. From their perspective, the rapidly evolving post-1945 environment posed an enormous challenge. Economically devastated, they were not in a position to maintain physical control of the territories they once ruled. Yet they still needed relatively easy access to the cheap resources they used to extract from those same colonies. Just as importantly perhaps, Britain and France in particular were anxious to retain, in the face of the emerging bipolar system, their national pride and the vestiges of their glorious past. In a sense, the old multipolar system was struggling to survive.

In the late 1950s, the former colonial powers were yet to find new ways of pursuing their old colonial ambitions. Should they try to retain physical control of remote territories, or should they attempt to establish alternative, less costly, but equally effective methods of control? They understood perfectly well that the choice would not always be theirs, that the decolonisation process had its own accelerating dynamic. Still, should they at least attempt to maintain a physical presence backed by military capabilities? They attempted to do precisely this during the 1956 Suez crisis. A choice in favour of arms-based classical colonialism, whether realistic or not, would imply the persistence of the military mode of rivalry between great powers.

The answers to these questions varied with each individual case. In some cases, these powers remained devoted to classical colonialism. In others, they gradually transformed into ‘neo’colonisers – a transformation which greatly benefited from the carefully established colonial structures they had bequeathed to the newly independent states. Former colonial powers had established powerful administrative, economic, social and cultural links with these countries over several years of colonial exploitation. Traditional colonialism was primarily, if not exclusively, based on military means. The pursuit of neocolonial ambitions, on the other hand, required alternative sources of influence. In any case, the emerging political trend in Western Europe was working against the continuation of an intra-European rivalry based on massive military investments. The transition from military-based classical colonialism to influence-based neocolonialism was not an easy one. In the process, the colonial powers held strongly to the principle of state sovereignty,
arguing that the colonies and protectorates were part of their ‘sovereign domain’.

The second dimension of the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism involved the search for identity by the former colonies. There were multiple influences over popular self-perceptions, with religion, race, nation, ethno-linguistic affinity, ideology and colonial heritage all playing a part. The most important common denominator of these self-perceptions was the scepticism, indeed hostility, towards the North – in particular the former colonial powers. Hence, Nasser’s Arab nationalism and Nkrumah’s Africanism were able to converge in their oppositional attitude towards colonial powers, especially Britain and France. In addition, the fast crystallising Third World mindset was able to establish cross-continental links. Decolonisation served as a pivotal concept around which the colonised world gained consciousness of their collective identity.

Another aspect of the search for identity was the influence exerted by the two superpowers. Leaders in several former colonies were convinced that their escape from subordination could not be accomplished without the help of either or both superpowers. It would be wrong to disregard the role played by the capitalism–communism debate in the decolonisation movement of the late 1950s, but it would also be a mistake to try and explain the fashion of the day, as is sometimes done, merely in terms of ‘ideology’ along the East–West axis. In certain cases political pragmatism played at least as important a role as commitment to ideology.

Nasser’s appeal to the Soviet Union cannot be adequately explained in terms of ideology, especially given the potency of religious and traditional sentiment in Egypt, which has always been antithetical to the atheistic and anti-feudal worldview attached to communism. In the Congo (one of our case studies) ideological appeals were sometimes made quite pragmatically, and perhaps even unconsciously. In December 1959, when Joseph Kasavubu told the socialist newspaper Le Peuple that political parties were ‘being manufactured by the dozen at the drop of a bank-note’, he was echoing the communist press of the day. However, as we shall see in Chapter 5, in retrospect it is difficult to argue that Kasavubu had communist tendencies. In any case, the search for identity in the South coincided with, contributed to and benefited from the escalation of geopolitical bipolarity.

Politics of non-alignment
A second dimension of the North–South conflict manifested itself in the non-aligned movement (NAM), which began to take shape at the Bandung conference held on 18–25 April 1955. The conference was convened at the initiative of a loose association of five states, known as the ‘Colombo powers’: Burma (Myanmar), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Indonesia and Pakistan.
Although there were only two criteria for participation (independence and being an Afro-Asian state), neither criterion was applied in a straightforward fashion. On the one hand, two colonies (Sudan and Ghana) were included among the invitees. On the other hand, such geographically eligible countries as Israel, South Africa, South Korea, North Korea and Taiwan were not. The Arab states would not tolerate Israeli participation. South Africa was considered an outcast. Participation of the two Koreas might create political problems for the organisers. And Taiwan could not be invited in China’s presence.

The gathering of 29 relatively less developed states at a time when the UN had only 59 members marked a turning point for the Third World. The major, perhaps the only, achievement of this conference was that it brought together several underdeveloped countries for the first time to discuss their worldviews. Significantly, the final communiqué stressed the importance of decolonisation and economic development for the South. After a number of significant follow-up meetings, in September 1961, at the invitation of Egypt, India and Yugoslavia, the first NAM summit (Belgrade) took place with the participation of 25 states.

Reportedly, there were three competing analyses as to the critical issues at stake. One group, led by Sukarno and Nkrumah, put the emphasis on colonialism and continuing great power intervention in the Third World. Another, led by Nehru, saw the growing nuclear threat and superpower rivalry as the overriding problem. Nasser and Tito, on the other hand, preferred to take the middle ground, not in the sense that their position was lukewarm and moderate, but in the sense that they put the emphasis on both the North–South and East–West conflicts. The final resolution reflected this last view. The organised South had established itself in terms of a powerful opposition to both colonialism and the Cold War.

The early 1960s: locating the UN at a critical juncture

Both in its structure and in its self-understanding, the UN was born in ambiguity. In one sense, the organisation had some of the characteristics of an alliance – a feature still reflected in the composition of the Security Council. Originally, ‘United Nations’ was a term that the Allied Powers had used to describe themselves. In 1945, at the San Francisco conference, this name would be given to a new organisation entrusted with the future maintenance of international peace and security. Considered from this vantage point, the UN was intended to serve the whole international community; it was to lay the groundwork of a future world where disputes would be resolved in a collective manner. From the outset, the smooth functioning of the world body was premised upon the peaceful coexistence of different
actors and opposing worldviews, among them the two superpowers and their respective ideologies.

The escalation of the Cold War influenced UN actions, including involvement in intra-state conflicts, in two significant respects. In the first place, as a logical extension of their geopolitical strategies, the two superpowers sought to counterbalance each other everywhere in the world. Their aim was not only to increase their own military and economic capabilities, but also to create new allies or client states. At the same time, they were intent on gaining access to the resources of former colonies. The Cold War was after all a costly struggle. Rhetoric aside, the superpowers were increasingly disposed to taking their place alongside the traditional colonial powers in what soon emerged as a neocolonial competition for Third World resources. In the process, many, if not most, intra-state conflicts were viewed as capable of altering, directly or indirectly, the balance of power between the two blocs. Whether a government was ‘friendly’ or ‘hostile’ mattered greatly to both superpowers. The mode and degree of UN responses to conflicts depended in part on how crucial a conflict was to the global strategic balance. The UN would be ‘allowed’ to become actively involved only at the margins of this balance.

Secondly, almost all conflicts in the world came to be seen by the superpowers as ‘international’ conflicts. Each conflict, whether intra-state, inter-state, or trans-state, assumed a global, geostrategic dimension so far as the two poles were concerned. In addition, and related with the transition from a multipolar to a bipolar world, the attitudes of the two superpowers to several conflicts contrasted sharply with those of the former colonial powers. What seemed ‘internal’ conflicts to the old colonialists (meaning internal to their colonial empires, as in Algeria or Rhodesia) were considered ‘international’ by the superpowers (meaning that the other superpower might intrude into that conflict at any moment). In this sense, the UN’s response to intra-state conflicts could not but reflect an overwhelming preoccupation with international peace and security, in a way that was not perhaps incompatible with the original intent of the Charter.

For several years, the Cold War prevented the increase of UN membership. Membership increased from the original 51 to 76 in the first decade, and then to 118 in the second decade. All of the new members between 1945 and 1955 were from either the Asia-Pacific region or Europe. In the mid-1950s the decolonisation process accelerated considerably, especially in Africa. Under mounting Third World pressure, the veto barrier to membership was eventually sidestepped. Out of the 42 new members between 1955 and 1965, all but 10 were African. By the early 1960s, the majority of the UN’s members were under the strong influence of the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism, with the Cold War cutting across that influence.
The interaction between the UN and non-state actors was at best embryonic in the first twenty years of the organisation’s history. Social movements and forces, which would be increasingly influential in shaping collective expectations of the UN in the years to come, had not yet fully developed. Several major IGOs, whether multipurpose or functional, were almost as new and inexperienced as the UN itself, with many of them established between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. Non-governmental organisations had been present at the San Francisco Conference as consultants of national delegations, with American NGOs, in particular, instrumental in defining Article 71 of the UN Charter. The earliest ECOSOC–NGO consultative arrangements were set forth in ECOSOC Resolutions 2/3 in 1946 and 288 B (X) in 1950. In the first twenty years, ECOSOC’s standing NGO committee was dominated by western states. By 1968, there were no more than 377 NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, with only 12 of them in the most influential ‘general’ category.

Almost from the outset, certainly from the Berlin crisis on, the Cold War had rendered the Security Council largely ineffectual, the first strong manifestation of which was the adoption of the ‘Uniting for Peace’ Resolution by the General Assembly during the 1950 Korean crisis – the first major outbreak of hostilities in which the UN played an active role. This was perhaps the first indicator of the General Assembly’s ‘rise in power’, a trend that would continue until the early 1960s. The Korean ‘War’ was indeed a direct by-product of strategic and ideological rivalry, in which the two superpowers as well as the emerging communist power, China, figured prominently.

Led by the United States, a group of pro-western states contributed to a military force under the UN flag, and waged war in an intra-Korean conflict which had clear international, even geostrategic, dimensions. This was perhaps the first blow to the UN’s ‘credibility’, at least in the eyes of the socialist powers. Thereafter, the Soviet Union tried to play its cards more carefully. The UN, it seemed, could become an effective actor in the hands of whichever power was best able to manipulate it. With hindsight, it appears as if Moscow was less well placed than Washington to influence or mobilise the UN in support of its interests, which is not to say that the Soviet Union did not successfully neutralise the UN on several occasions.

With the controversy over the Korean intervention the Cold War barriers to the UN’s peace and security function became fully apparent. The UN was rendered virtually impotent during the US intervention in Guatemala in 1954 and the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. Strategic bipolarity would make it practically impossible for the UN to intervene in conflicts, be they inter- or intra-state, if they were located within the US and Soviet spheres of influence, or in some way cut across the interests and priorities of either Washington or Moscow. The idea of UN peacekeeping matured almost at the
same time as the Guatemala and Hungary crises. It is noteworthy that this mechanism was developed in response to the Suez crisis rather than to events in Guatemala or Hungary. The Suez dispute had more to do with decolonisation than with the Cold War. In the aftermath of World War II, decolonisation was a dominant worldwide political project, enjoying the support of a significant coalition of international actors, including the superpowers.

In the early 1960s, the General Assembly would reaffirm its commitment to a key Charter principle, namely state sovereignty. In 1962, a resolution was adopted on states’ Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources. In 1965, a declaration was adopted on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty. These instruments showed the Third World’s insistence on the primacy of state sovereignty. Despite their occasional reservations, the colonial powers, too, held strongly to this UN principle which was best suited to protect their colonial interests. Colonies and protectorates were within the ‘sovereign domain’ of the colonial powers. No one else, including the UN, could be allowed to penetrate it. As a consequence, the questions of Algeria and Northern Ireland, to cite just two examples, were not even inscribed to the agenda of the Security Council, while the Rhodesian question was consistently referred to Britain for it to take appropriate action in its capacity as the ‘sovereign’ authority.

Primarily as a result of resistance by the South, the General Assembly began to elaborate a number of principles during this period. It emphasised, tentatively at first, various aspects of the human rights as well as socio-economic or development agendas. A landmark initiative was the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which may be described as a concrete embodiment of the decolonisation project. Adopted by 89 votes in favour and none against, the resolution was clearly Wilsonian in orientation, though the United States was among the nine abstaining countries, reflecting its support for its major allies. Other examples include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the inauguration of the (first) Development Decade.

In its first twenty years, the UN was ever more constrained by escalating superpower rivalry, while the organised South sought active UN action for the purposes of, and in contexts of, decolonisation. By the early 1960s, geopolitical bipolarity had become strong enough to outweigh the legacy of an earlier multipolar power configuration. With the decolonisation project speedily accomplished, the South began to lose its strength. The difficulty of maintaining unity among a fast growing Third World membership was no doubt an important factor. World politics entered a phase which, though it reflected a
new power configuration, was nevertheless compatible with the ideational attributes of the immediate post-War international order, namely preoccupation with the maintenance of international peace and security and protection of sovereignty.

The aftermath of double peaks

In the early 1960s, the multipolar power configuration was largely replaced by Cold War bipolarity. This, as we shall see, did not mean the complete disappearance of other important sources of influence. Nor did it mean a lack of ‘variety’ in the configuration of material capabilities. France in the western camp and China in the socialist camp, for instance, developed their relatively independent political attitudes. None the less, superpower rivalry was strong enough to be the primary influence in world politics. The rapidly unfolding decolonisation project and increasing ambiguities in the non-aligned spectrum added to this influence in the context of UN politics to the extent that the organised South lost two important unifying concepts that had facilitated UN action in the field of peace and security.

Consolidation of the East–West conflict (1962–85)

What we call the ‘consolidation’ of the East–West conflict corresponds roughly to the long rule of Brezhnev (1964–82) and to the successive US presidencies of Johnson (1963–69), Nixon (1969–74), Ford (1974–77) and Carter (1977–81). This period of more than twenty years was so rich in political drama and the evolution of the Cold War so exquisitely nuanced that it may seem inappropriate not to break it down into shorter periods. While we do not intend to do violence to the intricate nature of the Cold War, our seemingly oversimplistic presentation has a purpose. The point is that, once the Cold War matured and reached its peak (with the ‘blocs’ and nuclear arsenals firmly in place), it was consolidated at that peak level for over twenty years, with only relatively minor swings of the pendulum.61

East–West relations were continuously tense throughout this period, though this tension did not always manifest itself in outright crises. There was a constant oscillation between overt crises and covert rivalry. The intensity of the bipolar struggle, however, would not substantially moderate, except in a cosmetic sense, until the mid-1980s. The so-called periods of détente did not indicate a genuine soothing of the bipolar struggle, but a covert full-speed continuation of rivalry by other means. After the climax of confrontation in the early 1960s, both the United States and the Soviet Union felt that the probability of ‘hot’ conflict should be reduced. To do otherwise could prove costly
for both sides, given the fast expanding strategic arsenals available to both parties. With the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) coming to full maturity during this period, the Cold War would remain in full swing for more than twenty years, but with each party prudent enough not to provoke the other to a full-scale confrontation.

The oscillating pattern of relations between the two blocs was clearly visible in the 1960s. In 1963 confidence-building agreements were signed between the superpowers, including the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. In 1964, the United States entered the war in Vietnam. In 1967, President Johnson met with Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin in Glassboro. The following year came the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia. In 1969 the Americans landed on the moon, a ‘giant leap for mankind’ with serious implications for future development of strategic weaponry. Negotiations between the superpowers resulted in summit meetings and the signing of strategic arms limitation treaties in the early 1970s. SALT I (the first series of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) was concluded in 1972. Meanwhile, Brezhnev proclaimed that peaceful coexistence was the normal, permanent, and irreversible state of relations between imperialist and communist countries. He warned, though, that conflict might continue in the Third World. The Cold War had now stabilised at its ‘centre’, but instability resulting from fierce superpower competition was tolerated at the periphery.

Another significant development in the 1960s was China’s emerging ‘two front’ policy. Between 1963 and 1969, Beijing chose to confront both Washington and Moscow. Although no separate ‘bloc’ was formed around Beijing, the China factor emerged as another dimension in Cold War calculations. In 1969, in connection with heightening border conflicts, the Soviet Union threatened to launch a military strike against Chinese nuclear weapon installations, prompting China to move further away from the Soviet bloc, making the Sino-American rapprochement of the early 1970s possible.

In 1972, in the wake of the escalating Vietnam crisis, the superpowers signed a document setting out twelve basic principles governing their relations. The agreement had three main provisions. The first held that in the nuclear age there was no alternative to conducting mutual relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence and on the principles of sovereignty, equality and non-interference in internal affairs. Secondly, both superpowers recognised the ‘importance of preventing the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations’. Thirdly, both accepted a ‘special responsibility to do everything in their power so that conflicts or situations will not arise which would serve to increase international tensions’.

This document is instructive in that it points to the intermeshing of Cold War political calculations with two germane normative principles: state sovereignty and non-intervention. In other words, the new phase of the post-
1945 history was based on a new power configuration but reflected (was compatible with) the old value preferences. Violation of these principles would have the inevitable consequence of escalating tension, perhaps to the point of armed conflict. The principles were invoked with their geopolitical dimension in mind. Their main implication was that, if peace was to be maintained, the two superpowers had to stay clear of each other’s sphere of influence. The ‘internal’ affairs of Czechoslovakia, to give an example, should be of no concern to the United States. By the same token, ‘domestic’ politics in Chile should not overly concern the Soviet Union. The principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, then, served the purposes of both superpowers. Not in the sense that the superpowers would necessarily and absolutely keep away from each other’s backyards, but that they knew the boundaries of their respective spheres of influence. These principles would be inevitably reflected in the prescriptions which the two superpowers would seek to impose on the UN.

It is plausible to argue that the rhetorical superpower adherence to the principle of state sovereignty was in fact contradictory. The United States had justified its violations of other states’ sovereignty with reference to democracy and the ‘free world’. By the same token, Brezhnev had defended the Warsaw Pact operation in Czechoslovakia in the following terms:

We cannot ignore the assertions, held in some places, that the actions of the five socialist countries run counter to the Marxist-Leninist principle of sovereignty and the rights of nations to self-determination. The groundlessness of such reasoning consists primarily in that it is based on an abstract, non-class approach to the question of sovereignty... The sovereignty of each socialist country cannot be opposed to the interests of the world of socialism, of the world revolutionary movement.67

This superpower attitude may be seen as the beginning of the erosion of the principle of state sovereignty both in rhetoric and in practice. On the one hand, state sovereignty was frequently invoked by the superpowers as the key value in the prevailing world order. On the other hand, it was frequently violated in practice, but also endowed with multiple, even inconsistent, meanings.68 Implicit in the superpower mentality was the normative support for the idea that other states should sacrifice their sovereignty for a ‘greater common good’. This normative attitude may be seen as paving the way for the ‘interventionist’ normative prescriptions of the post-Cold War period. The Cold War had systematised and, to a degree, ‘legitimised’ such contradiction as was inherent in superpower thinking.69

In July 1975, the American–Soviet joint ‘Apollo Soyuz Test Project’ matured. During the mid-1970s, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process was set in train. The two blocs were now in search of an acceptable pattern of coexistence. The ensuing Helsinki Final Act of 1 August 1975 is perhaps best known for its ‘third basket’ which dealt with
humanitarian issues. This instrument may be considered as the first serious attempt on the part of the western camp to address the western and socialist audiences in order to ‘corner’ the Soviet bloc on the grounds of human rights abuses. In 1977, Jimmy Carter became US President, with an express commitment to the promotion of human rights as a key objective of foreign policy. Despite his adoption of the human rights discourse, however, Carter himself signalled early in the piece that this normative ‘commitment’ would be applied quite selectively.

In 1979 came SALT II, as did the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which quickly opened up a new phase of renewed confrontation. The invasion of Afghanistan coincided with Reagan’s election to the US Presidency. He came to power with the express intention of defeating what he called the ‘Evil Empire’, that is the Soviet Union. His most notable strategic policy, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), would intensify the Cold War. Meanwhile, Brezhnev’s death and the ensuing search for a new leader weakened the Soviet end of the geopolitical balance. The Soviet Union experienced a leadership crisis, not unlike, in some respects, the three-year power struggle after Stalin’s demise. Following the short-lived reigns of Andropov (1982–84) and Chernenko (1984–85), Gorbachev rose to power. His unexpectedly radical reformist policies paved the way for a rapprochement between the superpowers, and the Cold War entered its last phase in 1985.

Ascent and descent: dual trends in the South (1964–82)

By the time the second non-aligned summit took place (Cairo, 1964), the organised South had already become an influential, though somewhat loose, ‘bloc’ in world politics. The strong opposition to colonialism was coupled with the search for political and strategic non-alignment. Furthermore, the relatively independent moves of such important state actors as France in the western camp and China in the socialist camp provided further impetus and greater political or geopolitical space for several Third World leaders intent on carving out a non-aligned posture. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the Cold War overshadowed the North–South divide in its structural impact on the UN’s peace and security function. Ironically, the period of détente made it more and more difficult for Third World countries to play the superpowers against each other.

It is arguable that the Cold War was all along present within the NAM. Nasser had received Soviet aid during the Suez crisis in 1956. The participants of the Cairo Conference of December 1957 had included socialist delegations. From the late 1950s onwards, superpower confrontation managed to penetrate the movement at a greater pace. One manifestation of this penetration was the establishment of military regimes with the active
support of the superpowers. To cite but a few examples, the coercive regime changes in Cuba and Iraq were backed by the Soviet Union, while that in the Congo enjoyed US support. Perhaps a striking case, which vividly demonstrates the point, is that of Indonesia, a leading non-aligned country, where a Soviet-backed coup attempt was countered by an American-backed counter-coup which installed the Suharto regime in 1965.

The Third World’s endeavours to eradicate colonialism, bypass strategic bipolarity, and achieve socio-economic development led to a number of multilateral initiatives which would coexist with Cold War alliances. Several major IGOs had been established in the South, adding further weight to Third World responses to the East–West and North–South conflicts. The League of Arab States (Arab League) and the Organization of American States (OAS), founded in 1945 and 1948 respectively, were joined by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. Although the Cold War inescapably influenced the formation and policies of these organisations, they added a different dimension to the institutionalisation of governance. As our subsequent chapters will demonstrate, these organisations would not necessarily or always ‘compete’ with the UN in dealing with intra-state conflicts in their respective regions. Unable to deal with those conflicts single-handedly – unable not only because they lacked the necessary means and capacity, but also because they were not well placed to reconcile the local, regional and global interests at stake – they would seek ways of introducing the UN into those conflict environments.

From the mid-1960s, non-aligned politics was increasingly connected to and reinforced by the development-oriented activities of less developed countries whose efforts led to the first UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. Finding partial shelter under the umbrella of NAM and UNCTAD, Third World states, whose number grew with each passing year, were now questioning the legitimacy of the post-1945 order. The third NAM conference, held in Lusaka in 1970, would be followed by conferences in Algiers (1973), Colombo (1976), Havana (1979) and New Delhi (1983). The NAM was unambiguously opposed to colonialism, an attitude which the movement had maintained since its inception and which carried with it a particular normative position, best described as defence of state sovereignty writ large. Attempts to prevent the Cold War from penetrating into the domestic affairs of Third World states strengthened the consolidation of this normative position. In this sense at least, ‘solidarity’ was an inherent quality of non-alignment, in that it had contributed significantly to the ascent of the Third World as a political force with its own normative baggage.

On the socio-economic front, the international monetary crisis of 1971 was perhaps the first blow to the socio-economic aspirations of the Third World. Following the Six-Day War and the oil crisis precipitated by the
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1973, the United States attempted to break up the conjunctural unity of the South. Secretary of State Kissinger invited the ‘most seriously affected’ states (the ‘Fourth World’), that is the poorest oil-importing states, to participate in the Western Energy Coordinating Group. Algeria countered by proposing a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Under OPEC pressure, a Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC) was convened between 1975 and 1977. It soon became apparent, however, that the South was unable to act as a unified group, although the general emphasis on a broadly stated normative objective, namely the need to press ahead with the socio-economic development of Third World countries, assumed increasing legitimacy.

The 1980s was the decade of debt crises. Beginning with Mexico in August 1982, a number of southern countries, including Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, experienced serious and at times crippling financial difficulties. This left them in a highly ambiguous position. On the one hand, they became ever more critical of the existing global economic system, but on the other, they had to be on good terms with the North just to survive. This may be seen both as an early sign of – and a contributing factor to – the western dominance that would mature in the following decade.

The UN after double peaks: towards ideational changes

The second twenty years of the UN were marked by the ineffectiveness of the Security Council for obvious reasons related to the Cold War. In 1971, as a result of the Sino-American rapprochement China replaced Taiwan in the Security Council. This, in effect, rendered the Security Council even more idle. The Council’s ineffectiveness was coupled with the ‘stagnation’ of the General Assembly, notwithstanding the proliferation of UN standard-setting activities, especially with respect to human rights. In 1966, the General Assembly had adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. From 22 April to 13 May 1968, the first International Conference on Human Rights was held in Tehran. The increasing pace of UN norm-setting in human rights resulted, in part, from the fact that the principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention were already firmly endorsed as the primary rules of the game in international relations. In other words, the necessary space had been created to deal more flexibly with relatively ‘secondary’ social issues, which were nevertheless institutionalised in the Charter.

The superpowers had endorsed the primacy of state sovereignty as a requirement of their coexistence. The (neo)colonial powers had given their utmost support to the principle, for intervention in their ‘internal’ affairs might hasten the break-up of their empires. Third World states had jealously
embraced state sovereignty, simply because it embodied their political independence and territorial integrity. If this consensus of state actors was a permissive factor for the increasing norm-setting in human rights under UN auspices – permissive in the sense that the ‘house’ was in order, or so it seemed – the influence of transnational social forces was a proactive factor. The proliferation and empowerment of non-state actors was but one manifestation of this influence. Perhaps more important was the increasing maturity of national and transnational ‘audiences’\(^80\) in response to which state and non-state actors positioned themselves. Finding encouragement, at least in rhetoric, from such developments as the CSCE process and the Carter Presidency, human rights organisations made their voices more widely heard in UN corridors in the 1970s.

In May 1968, ECOSOC established new consultative arrangements for NGOs at the UN. In accordance with Resolution 1296 two major reviews were conducted on ECOSOC–NGO relations, in 1968–69 and in 1978 respectively.\(^81\) The former was initiated by Tanzania, while the latter was called for by Argentina in the face of mounting criticism from NGOs.\(^82\) In August 1977, a draft decision sponsored by Argentina, and supported by the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia,\(^83\) was adopted by ECOSOC, which requested the Secretary-General ‘to invite interested Member States to provide any relevant information concerning compliance by non-governmental organizations with the principles governing consultative status’.\(^84\) Only eight governments responded to the invitation, four of which (Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands and West Germany) defended and praised the role of NGOs, while two (Argentina and Syria) were bitterly critical.\(^85\)

The creation of the Working Group on Forced or Involuntary Disappearances was largely motivated by the detailed NGO reports in relation to Chile and Argentina.\(^86\) Amnesty International’s fact-finding mission to Argentina in 1977 would be described by an observer as ‘one of the most significant human rights missions ever undertaken by a non-governmental organisation’.\(^87\) When discussions in the Commission of Human Rights were blocked by governments, it was again NGOs which mobilised media and diplomatic pressure and managed, eventually, to systematise the so-called ‘thematic’ human rights mechanisms.\(^88\)

These developments contributed to increasing legitimacy of non-governmental human rights activism under the UN umbrella. Furthermore, beginning with the late 1970s, the number and field activities of non-governmental development and humanitarian agencies increased, leading to growing NGO–UN interaction.\(^89\) Yet, the Cold War did not easily allow for UN and non-UN humanitarian action. As Donini puts it, ‘cross border humanitarian assistance was basically taboo for the UN since it was tantamount to a violation of sovereignty’.\(^90\) In other words, the dominant interpretations of
institutionalised values (Charter principles) tended to resist the ideational changes slowly taking place as a result of strengthening social movements that had to operate within Cold War structural constraints.

The period between 1967 and 1978 saw the assumption of responsibility by the UN Commission on Human Rights, which would gradually evolve ‘towards an effective response’ from 1979 onwards. In the process, two significant UN procedures were developed by the adoption of ECOSOC Resolutions 1235 and 1503. The former stated that violations could be examined and responded to in a public debate at the Commission. The latter called for consistent patterns of gross human rights violations to be pursued with governments in private. On the other hand, in its instruments and decisions, UNESCO increasingly linked ‘human rights’ and ‘peace’.

In two exceptional cases, the strengthening human rights agenda made its presence felt in the field of peace and security. In 1966, in a series of resolutions, the Security Council imposed, reaffirmed and intensified sanctions on Southern Rhodesia. Each resolution made explicit reference either to Chapter VII in general or to Articles 39 and 41 in particular. As legally binding instruments, these resolutions were ‘decisions’ rather than ‘calls upon’ member states. The Security Council decision on the interception of tankers carrying oil to Southern Rhodesia in 1966 was the only instance in the UN’s history – after Korea, but before Iraq – in which member states were authorised to use military force on behalf of the UN. Then, in November 1977, the Security Council adopted, expressly under Chapter VII, its first and only binding decision to impose mandatory sanctions on South Africa which remained, after the lifting of sanctions against Rhodesia, the only country to be subjected to UN sanctions. The Security Council’s subsequent resolutions merely ‘recommended’ rather than ‘decided’ that sanctions be imposed. More importantly, three proposed resolutions providing for mandatory sanctions were vetoed by Britain and the United States. The limited and selective nature of the UN’s response to Rhodesia and South Africa notwithstanding, common to the UN’s response in both cases was a growing preoccupation with the human rights dimensions of the conflict.

If human rights were one emerging international concern that began to be voiced more vigorously under UN auspices, another was socio-economic development. Advocacy of this second concern was most obviously associated with the Third World whose impact on the UN in the field of peace and security (such exceptional cases as South Africa and Southern Rhodesia notwithstanding) became increasingly marginalised. UNCTAD I saw the formation of the so-called ‘Group of 77’ – a coalition based primarily on a shared criticism of the post-War liberal economic order, best symbolised by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) regime. Under enormous pressure from the South, the industrialised countries did participate in
UNCTAD, albeit reluctantly. In the course of discussions they proposed that UNCTAD be placed under the authority of ECOSOC rather than be created as an autonomous specialised agency. Another proposal, which envisaged equal representation of developed and developing countries on the standing committee, was subsequently revised to allow substantive decisions to be taken by the approval of the twelve major trading countries. As these terms were unacceptable to the South, a compromise formula was eventually crafted, whereby UNCTAD became a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, and an elaborate voting procedure was devised to allow for decisions by consensus.102

In November 1965, the UNDP was established. In the lead-up to UNCTAD II (New Delhi, 1968), the Group of 77 adopted the Algiers Charter, which may be considered the South’s first major declaration on socio-economic development. It called for action in a number of sectors which the South deemed critical to its development prospects.103 In the aftermath of UNCTAD III (Santiago, 1972), Algeria’s NIEO proposal would be translated at the General Assembly in December 1974 into the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. These moves contributed to changes in the international context, especially in its ideational dimension. Subsequent UN Conferences on Trade and Development would be held in Nairobi (1976), Manila (1979) and Belgrade (1983). Yet, partly as a consequence of successive international economic crises and the steady deterioration of the relative position of the developing economies – with the exception of the newly industrialised countries, particularly in East Asia – the impetus which the UNCTAD process had generated would lose steam with each passing conference.

Despite the structural constraints on the UN’s peace and security function, the UN as actor increasingly entered into the orbit of ideational change characteristic of this period. The rising importance of human rights and socio-economic development would crystallise even more after the Cold War. Human rights and, to a lesser degree, socio-economic development, would find their way into the collective expectations which international actors now had of the UN in relation to peacekeeping environments.

When North equals West: ‘unipolar’ configuration and rising hegemony

In the mid-1980s came the early signals of yet another critical juncture in world history. In 1985, Gorbachev engaged in his dual policies of perestroika (reconstruction) and glasnost (openness). If the former implied the search for breaking the economic stagnation of the Soviet Union, the latter was in part a response to mounting international and domestic pressure for human rights and democratisation. The Cold War had entered its last phase.

The social potential for reform had already gathered momentum in
several Soviet client states as exemplified by the Hungarian (1956) and Czechoslovak (1968) crises and the Solidarity movement in Poland (1980). In 1989 the Berlin Wall was dismantled. Liberal revolutions took place one by one in Eastern European countries. In 1990, West and East Germany unified. This was a significant indicator not only of the end of the Cold War, but also of the re-birth of another world power. Germany, with its restored self-confidence, would gain ever more status, prestige and influence within what would soon become the European ‘Union’.

With these events unfolding, a ‘unipolar moment’, which had been gradually emerging since the global debt crisis on the economic front and Gorbachev’s rise to power on the political front, reached its maturity. At this particular moment, geopolitical bipolarity was seemingly replaced by unipolarity. Perhaps the best visual representation of this unipolarity, strategically, was the ascendancy of NATO. The increasing sway of a particular phase of the capitalist/liberal doctrine, with a stronger than usual emphasis on ‘free market’ and democracy, embodied the ideological dimension. By 1992, the Soviet bloc had ceased to exist. At this particular moment, the United States epitomised strategic and ideological unipolarity in international politics. In 1993, Clinton took over from Bush, putting ‘assertive multilateralism’ in the forefront of US foreign policy, implying increased US participation in multilateral peace and security operations.

With the elimination of the Second World, the ‘North’ became a synonym for the ‘West’. The four-decade old East–West and North–South conflicts were replaced by a more ambiguous pattern of global conflict between the West and the South, in which the increasing homogeneity of the former was juxtaposed with the increasing heterogeneity of the latter. The historical/cultural/political traditions of the states comprising the western alliance system were, it seemed, sufficiently similar to sustain an emerging western ‘hegemony’ whereas the South now encompassed (with the inclusion of the former Soviet bloc) an even broader spectrum of historical/cultural/political traditions and orientations, less able to rely on such unifying concepts as ‘decolonisation’ or ‘non-alignment’. The NAM summits in Harare (1986), Belgrade (1989), Jakarta (1992), Cartagena (1995) and the UNCTAD conferences in Geneva (1987) and Cartagena (1992) failed to produce coherent alternatives to the West’s dominant ideology. The influence that the South had exercised in the early 1960s in defining the normative basis of the UN’s peace and security function had for the time being markedly diminished.

At the same time, the fusion of the two previous axes of global conflict enhanced the widespread perception of a rapidly ‘globalising’ world in that the territorial and conceptual ‘boundaries’ along the East–West and North–South axes were increasingly irrelevant to the global mosaic of peace and security problems. More concretely, the European Union was not
immune to the challenges posed by the break-up of Yugoslavia. Nor was the United States immune to drug trafficking through Central America, nor Russia or China immune to ethnic and religious tensions in their vicinity.

What is more, the West and the South, while standing in opposition, penetrated each other at an accelerating rate in the absence of any central ordering principles of the kind provided by the Cold War. In the first place, the ‘ungovernable’ states in the South caused regional political instability, most obviously in their immediate neighbourhood. Such regional instability, while important in its own right, also created new obstacles to western exploitation of the material resources and commercial, financial, and labour markets in the regions adjacent to conflict. Moreover, several of these conflicts posed new security threats for the West, including cross-continent refugee flows, political terrorism, transnational crime and environmental degradation.

The West’s response was to export comprehensive recipes for ‘governability’. On one side, ‘liberal’ recipes for political governance – whether through bilateral arrangements or through such organisations as the EU and the CSCE (now OSCE) – were offered to, often imposed on, the South. On the other side, ‘capitalist’ recipes for economic governance were exported – whether through bilateral programmes or through such organisations as the OECD, the Bretton Woods Institutions or the GATT (since 1995 the World Trade Organization (WTO)). Furthermore, the recipes for ‘economic’ governance were increasingly tied to political ‘good governance’.

Western penetration of the South, however, was not merely the result of government policies. The influence of global mass media, civil society networks, and transnational companies was far from negligible. Several of the most influential non-state actors flourished within the West, and necessarily reflected as well as contributed to western power configurations, be they material or ideational. Equally important was the growing interconnectedness, indeed interconnectedness, between western governmental, semi-governmental and non-governmental actors. None of this, of course, is to argue that the West was a homogeneous entity. Significant tensions now existed among western states as well as between state and non-state actors.

The early 1990s: the UN at another critical juncture

With a unipolar power configuration at its peak, both the West and the South increasingly turned to the UN for action – though for different reasons. The West, now the dominant source of influence, would gain wider ‘legitimacy’ by acting through UN channels. The South, on the other hand, could still exert a degree of influence over the actions of this globally multilateral institution.
which had relative transparency, accountability and sensitivity to public scrutiny. The UN had also long endorsed the principle of ‘sovereign equality’, and established mechanisms through which each and every member state could present its case and make its voice ‘heard’ by the great powers. Furthermore, under the emerging hegemony, there was now an audience inside as well as outside of the West, which shared ever more of the western ‘image’ of an ideal world order, revolving around capitalist/liberal recipes, with its corresponding human rights and democracy discourse.

With the erosion of the Cold War, the Security Council gradually assumed its original functions, while the General Assembly entered a phase of ‘decline’ from the mid-1980s becoming increasingly irrelevant to the UN’s peace and security function. On the one hand, the South, dissatisfied with the non-amelioration of its global condition, had lost the influence of earlier decades. On the other, the West – the United States in particular – was not disposed to using the General Assembly for vital policy choices, for it knew that it might no longer be able to mobilise the necessary two-thirds majority. At the same time, however, the General Assembly continued to build on the ideational advances that had begun to take shape in the earlier period. It organised landmark conferences such as the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993, with the participation of 171 governments and 1,529 NGOs. There were now 978 NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, with 42 of them in the ‘general’ category. On 20 December 1993, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 48/141 and established the post of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR). Now the UN as an organisation was increasingly coming under the influence of a re-assessment of the Charter, in which the human rights and socio-economic concerns were given higher priority than before vis-à-vis state sovereignty.

The years following 1988 represented by far the UN’s most active period so far as its peace and security function is concerned. The revival of UN peacekeeping after two decades of stagnation came with the end of the two arguably most important international conflicts of the 1980s. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, UNGOMAP was established to report possible violations of the Agreement on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan, while the UN Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) was given the task of verifying compliance with the cease-fire agreement reached between Iran and Iraq after the first Gulf War.

The following year, the UN introduced peacekeeping forces into the complex southern African crises. The First UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I) was deployed in Angola and the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia. The same year, the UN Observer Group in Central America (ONUSCA) was called upon to verify observance of the Central American security agreement, Esquipulas II, between Costa Rica, El Salvador,
Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Although Central America had always been a region of severe conflicts, this was the first time a UN peacekeeping mission would be deployed in this exclusively American sphere of influence. In 1989, two other operations were authorised in Central America, in Nicaragua (ONUVEN) and in Haiti (ONUVEH).

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the Security Council imposed ‘previously unimaginable sanctions’ on Iraq. Upon the alleged failure of these sanctions, the early days of 1991 witnessed the second UN collective security action after Korea: Operation Desert Storm. Thirty-eight countries participated directly in the Gulf War coalition, and four others provided major financial and logistic support. A wide range of other military and civilian missions soon followed. The aftermath of the Gulf War saw a rapid proliferation of UN peacekeeping efforts in general, including the ‘humanitarian interventions’ where the discourse on human rights and democracy achieved striking prominence.

Concluding observations

The East–West and North–South conflicts may be said to have structurally constrained, and at times shaped, not only the UN’s evolving role in world politics, but also the normative preferences of international actors, which in turn influenced the agenda and the functioning of the world body. The two active periods of intra-state peacekeeping largely coincided with two critical junctures of the post-1945 period: the early 1960s and the early 1990s. This coincidence is instructive not because it helps us to ‘explain’ in causal terms why the two periods witnessed a proliferation of intra-state peacekeeping operations (though there is a strong correlation), but because international expectations as to how the UN should act vis-à-vis intra-state conflicts were strikingly influenced by the material and ideational characteristics of the prevailing environment.

The Cold War reached its peak in the early 1960s. The decolonisation project and the South’s ambitious experiment with non-alignment had made equal strides by then. The almost ‘organic’ links between the two axes of conflict became particularly visible and influential at this critical juncture. In the first place, the major Cold War allies of the United States (the colonial powers) were direct parties to the ‘political’ North–South conflict. Secondly, the two superpowers had in a sense become participants in an emerging ‘neo’-colonial rivalry over Third World resources. Thirdly, the newly decolonised territories of Asia and Africa had become part of the global superpower contest for strategic and ideological influence. A policy of aligning with or leaning towards one superpower was almost invariably treated as intolerable by the other.
The West, the East and the South were not, of course, at any stage mono-
lithic entities. Nevertheless, reasonably ‘uniform’ western, eastern and
southern political positions were discernible by the early 1960s. In this sense,
it could be argued that a short-lived ‘tripolar’ power configuration heavily
impacted on the UN’s peace and security function. The ideational component
of this particular historical moment reflected an ambiguous but significant
consensus between these three sources of influence. That consensus – one
that was still compatible with the normative preferences that prevailed at the
close of World War II – centred on the relative primacy of two Charter prin-
ciples: maintenance of international peace and security, and state sovereignty
(understood largely in its external dimension). This consensus would, as we
shall see in subsequent chapters, greatly influence the UN’s ‘objectives’. The
acute tension between the three main sources of geopolitical influence, on the
other hand, would impact on the definition of the UN’s ‘authority’ in intra-
state peacekeeping environments.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the increasing irrelevance of the UN in
the field of peace and security, partly epitomised, as we shall see in the next
chapter, by the relative absence and low profile of peacekeeping missions.
The weakening southern voice in the political domain, coupled with an
intense bipolarity, rendered the UN relatively ineffectual. The normative
texture of the international community, however, underwent considerable
change in these two decades, paving the way for the ideational attributes of
the post-Cold War period. While, in a sense, the UN’s objectives and author-
ity in peace and security were ‘frozen’ in time, its activities in the fields of
human rights and socio-economic development laid the groundwork for
ideational changes in the international realm. In other words, usually
considered nothing more than a ‘talk shop’ in realpolitik terms, the UN as a
forum nevertheless slowly yet steadily helped to redefine the normative pref-
erences of the international community. This redefinition would, in turn,
help to reformulate, over time, the international community’s normative
expectations of the UN.

In the mid- to late 1980s, with the erosion of the Cold War and the impact
of financial and debt crises, the interaction of the East–West and North–South
conflicts entered a new phase. The prevailing power configuration at this
‘strategically unipolar’ moment was even more difficult to identify than in
previous periods, be it in its material, ideational or institutional dimension.
The ascending northern/western ‘hegemony’ reflected the economic, politi-
cal, cultural and ideological influences exerted by both state and non-state
actors. Not only the United States, but Britain, France, Germany and Japan
were no doubt part of the emerging liberal/capitalist hegemony. So were
inter-governmental organisations/arrangements (e.g. the EU, OECD, G7,
NAFTA) and a host of non-governmental agencies, formally and informally
organised (e.g. business, media, human rights, humanitarian, developmentalist, environmentalist and feminist groups), all of which in varying degrees contributed to, mirrored, yet also challenged the West-centred hegemony. In other words, the prevailing hegemony had to contend with its own internal contradictions. It carried, in other words, the seeds for possible future change.

Not surprisingly, then, the early 1990s would mark another critical juncture in the evolution of the UN. Not only did the international community have higher expectations of the UN than before, but the influences bearing upon international normative prescriptions for the UN would become more diverse and less easily identifiable than in the earlier periods. In countless ways, the United States and other leading members comprising the loose western coalition were the ‘most’ influential actors defining the normative basis of UN action in this period, yet underlying the ‘western hegemony’ were more subtle but stronger structural constraints. No single actor or group of actors could be equated with the exercise of structural influence. The rising profile of human rights and socio-economic development was not easily attributable to any one source of power, whether expressed in material, ideational or institutional terms. In the early 1990s, the UN’s objectives and authority as manifested in peacekeeping environments would, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, increasingly reflect a normative shift of quasi-paradigmatic proportions.

**NOTES**

2 A phrase first used by Bernard Baruch in 1947 and subsequently popularised by Walter Lippman.
3 A term first coined by Winston Churchill in 1946.
4 The Treaty of Washington (the North Atlantic Treaty) was signed on 4 April 1949, by Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and the United States. Greece (1952), Turkey (1952) and West Germany (1955) would later accede to the Treaty. Spain would join NATO as late as 1982.
6 COMECON was founded in January 1949 by a joint *communiqué* of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union. Its Charter would be adopted in 1959. COMECON’s members were Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Vietnam.
8 The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (the Manila Pact) was signed on 8 September 1954 by Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States.
9 The Pact of Mutual Cooperation between Britain, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey (the Baghdad Pact) was signed on 24 February 1955.
10 The Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States (ANZUS) was already signed on 1 September 1951.
11 The Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance was signed on 14 May 1955 by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union.
12 Ball, *The Cold War*, p. 84.
14 In a few years’ time, France would sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Germany; announce the withdrawal of its fleet from the Atlantic Allied Command; recognise the People’s Republic of China; withdraw from the NATO Integrated Military Command in protest over what de Gaulle portrayed as US domination of the Alliance; and would force NATO to move its headquarters from Paris to Brussels; for a chronology, see www.france.diplomatie.fr/archives/archives.gb/expo/140/index.html (19 June 2000).
15 While this notion was not entirely new – Hobson’s and Lenin’s views on imperialism, for instance, were already known – its penetration into everyday political thought in virtually all parts of the world was new.
20 The lingering attempts of certain states to preserve multipolarity in the face of crystallising bipolarity was especially evident in this episode. The United States strongly disapproved of the joint Anglo-French policy that was devised and implemented in the absence of any consultation with Washington: see Frye, *A United Nations Peace Force*, p. 10.
21 Lusophone Africa, for instance, remained under direct Portuguese control until the mid-1970s.
22 The *Commonwealth* and the *Francophonie*, with 54 and 51 members respectively, are illuminating examples of how deep-rooted and important those links can be.
23 For instance, on 15 December 1960 the Heads of State of Francophone Africa held a conference in Brazzaville. Not only ‘being African’ or ‘fighting for independence’, but also ‘speaking French’ was part of the emerging collective identity of these states.
25 This, of course, is not to argue that the Third World was strongly ‘united’.
The UN’s role in historical context

28 Five roughly defined groups attended the conference: the Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen); Southeast Asia (Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines); South Asia (Afghanistan, Ceylon, India, Iran, Nepal and Pakistan); Black Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana and Liberia); and special cases (China, Japan and Turkey): see Mortimer, The Third World Coalition (New York: Praeger, 1980), pp. 8–9.
29 In July 1956, Nasser, Nehru and Tito met at Brioni to exchange their ideas on non-alignment. In December 1957, the Afro-Asia Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) conference in Cairo was attended by forty-four delegations. In June 1961, again in Cairo, a preparatory meeting took place, which paved the way for the first NAM summit. A non-aligned state was now defined as one that ‘pursued a foreign policy of national independence based on peaceful coexistence, supported national liberation movements, and eschewed the multilateral military alliances . . . and bilateral alliances with the great powers’: see Mortimer, The Third World Coalition, p. 12. This definition would lead to a conference whose composition was radically different from Bandung, where almost half of the participants would have failed the test set by these criteria.
30 Afghanistan, Algeria (the only non-independent state to be invited, which was represented by its provisional government-in-exile), Ceylon, the Congo (Léopoldville), Cuba, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen, the United Arab Republic (established in February 1958, the UAR would represent both Egypt and Syria until its dissolution in October 1961) and Yugoslavia.
31 Sukarno’s Indonesia was a crucial actor in bringing about the UN peacekeeping mission in West Irian; and Nkrumah’s Ghana would be a major troop contributor in the Congo operation: see Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.
32 While bitterly critical of the pro-western policies of the UN mission in the Congo, Nehru’s India would refuse to strengthen the hand of the Soviet Union: see Chapter 5.
33 Nasser’s Egypt had not obstructed UN peacekeeping in the Suez and Lebanon, and would not object to the Yemen operation. In all three cases Egypt was a party to the conflict: see Chapter 4. When the Security Council was blocked during the Suez crisis, on the other hand, it was Tito’s Yugoslavia who proposed that the matter be transferred to the General Assembly for action: see United Nations, The Blue Helmets, 3rd edn, p. 36.
34 Yet important differences would be detected in due course between the views of such leading figures as Castro and Gaddafi: see P. Braillard and M-R. Djalili, The Third World and International Relations (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), pp. 134–7.
35 As of 2000, Switzerland was not a member of the UN on the grounds of its commitment to neutrality.
36 The Declaration by the United Nations was signed by 26 states on 1 January 1942.

69


45 GA resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950 was adopted by 52 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions. Byelorussia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Ukraine voted against; Argentina and India abstained.

46 Out of the 111 vetoes cast until the discussions about Southern Rhodesia in 1963, all but 7 belonged to the Soviet Union. Between 1946 and 1990, the veto was cast 124 times by the Soviet Union, 82 by the United States, 33 by Britain, 18 by France and 22 by China: see Patil, *The UN Veto in World Affairs*, pp. 471–86.

47 GA Resolution 1803 (XVII) of 14 December 1962, adopted by 87 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions.

48 The UN’s Suez operation was authorised by GA Resolution 1000 (ES-I) of 5 November 1956, by 57 votes to 0, with 19 abstentions, including the parties to the conflict (Egypt, Israel, Britain and France) and the Soviet bloc.

49 GA Resolution 1803 (XVII) of 14 December 1962, adopted by 87 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions.

50 Consider also the five key principles enunciated by Nehru in April 1954 (known as the Panch Shila) which were adopted as the basis of relations among Afro-Asian states as early as the Bandung Conference.

51 France had voted against GA Resolution 1803, and Britain had abstained in the voting of GA Resolution 2131.
56 For instance, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established pursuant to GA Resolutions 319 (IV) of 3 December 1949 and 428 (V) of 14 December 1950. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, although of considerable significance, expressed relatively vague ideas. This instrument would gain ever more normative status in the course of time.
57 GA Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.
58 The others were Australia, Belgium, Britain, the Dominican Republic, France, Portugal, South Africa and Spain.
59 GA Resolution 2106 A (XX) of 21 December 1965, adopted by 106 to 0, with 1 abstention.
60 GA Resolution 1710 (XVI) of 19 December 1961, adopted unanimously.
61 Reportedly, even as late as 1989, the addition of new strategic options did not alter the basic nuclear war scenario of the 1960s: for a brief account, see the ‘American Memory’ website: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+su0441 (26 March 2001).
66 Ball, The Cold War, p. 146.
68 This observation on superpower behaviour reflects not only our third party/academic judgement, but also the view of a great number of international actors, hence hinting at their notion of state sovereignty. To give but one example, in 1968 Albania would harshly criticise the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia, and leave the alliance.
69 Yet perhaps we should not overestimate the significance of this factor, since the principle of state sovereignty was beset by inconsistencies and contradictions, both in rhetoric and in practice, long before the Cold War was in sight. One only needs to recall the Monroe doctrine.
70 It is, however, frequently ignored that the ‘first basket’ (on security) ranked the principles that would guide relations between the participating states in the following order: 1. Sovereign equality, respect for their rights inherent in sovereignty; 2. Refraining from the threat or use of force; 3. Inviolability of frontiers; 4. Territorial integrity of States; 5. Peaceful settlement of disputes; 6. Non-intervention in internal affairs; 7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; 8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples; 9. Cooperation among States; 10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.
71 His following statement is a case in point: ‘We have reaffirmed America’s commitment to human rights as a fundamental tenet of our foreign policy . . . This does not mean that we can conduct our foreign policy by rigid moral maxims. We live in a world
that is imperfect and which will always be imperfect – a world that is complex and confused and which will always be complex and confused.’ See Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1 (1977), 954, available online at www.civnet.org/resources/teach/basic/part8/55.htm (22 May 2001).

72 A typical case was Sihanouk in Cambodia.

73 Admittedly, the OAS was a US-driven organisation, but several Latin American voices in the OAS would periodically oppose the US policy. The case of the Dominican Republic (1965–66) is a good example: see Chapter 4.

74 See Mortimer, The Third World Coalition, pp. 24–42.

75 The crisis was prompted by Nixon’s Address to the Nation Outlining a New Economic Policy: ‘The Challenge of Peace’ (15 August 1971). The convertibility of US dollar into gold and other reserve assets was suspended; an additional tax of 10 per cent was levied on goods imported into the US; and the US foreign economic aid was cut by 10 per cent: see P. Marshall, ‘The North–South dialogue: Britain at odds’, in E. Jensen and T. Fisher (eds), The United Kingdom – The United Nations (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990), p. 201.

76 Almost simultaneously, the wealthy ‘Group of 7’ was beginning to take shape at the Rambouillet (1975), San Juan (1976) and London (1977) summits.

77 Meanwhile, with the conclusion of the first Lomé Convention in February 1975, the European Community created what is known today as the ‘African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states of the EU’, including some 70 southern states. The convention established a close link of development aid between the EU and a great many underdeveloped countries, explicitly responding to the demands by UNCTAD, yet implicitly weakening the non-aligned ideology to which many of these countries were devoted.


79 GA Resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966.


81 Pei-heng, Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations, p. 171.


83 At about the same time, especially the Soviet Union was highly critical of human rights NGOs, among them Amnesty International, the International League for Human Rights, and the Anti-Slavery Society; Pei-heng, Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations, p. 189.


85 Pei-heng, Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations, p. 191.

86 This was the first mechanism that could take action globally on individual cases on an emergency basis: see F. D. Gaer, ‘Reality check: human rights NGOs confront governments at the UN’, in T. G. Weiss and L. Gordenker (eds), NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 54.

87 Gaer, ‘Reality check’, p. 54.


89 A. Donini, ‘The bureaucracy and the free spirits: stagnation and innovation in the relationship between the UN and NGOs’, in Weiss and Gordenker (eds), NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance, pp. 92–3.

90 Donini, ‘The bureaucracy and the free spirits’, p. 93.
The UN’s role in historical context

92 Peck, Sustainable Peace, p. 81.
95 SC Resolution 221 of 9 April 1966 (adopted by 10 votes to none, with Bulgaria, France, Mali, the Soviet Union and Uruguay abstaining) called upon Britain to ‘prevent, by the use of force if necessary, the arrival at Beira of vessels reasonably believed to be carrying oil destined for Southern Rhodesia’: see operative para. 5.
99 For instance, SC Resolution 569 dated 26 July 1985.
100 See Beyerlin, ‘Sanctions’, p. 1117.
101 For the gradual formation of an anti-Apartheid coalition, with a particular emphasis on the ‘change of identity’ which it implied, see A. Klotz, Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
102 See Mortimer, The Third World Coalition, p. 17.
103 These included trade in raw materials, trade in manufactured and semi-finished products, development finance, maritime transport and some special measures for the least developed countries.
105 Three former Warsaw Pact members (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) would become NATO members as of 1999.
106 Our task here is to offer an analysis and not a moral judgement. Nevertheless, given our remarks about the impact of a researcher’s normative convictions on his research (see Chapter 1), it should be noted in passing that we find the ‘liberal’ political recipes, including especially the insistence on human rights and democracy, as beneficial, but the ‘capitalist’ economic recipes as biased and ill-informed. Furthermore, in our view, the argument that liberalism and capitalism are inseparable twin-concepts lacks credibility.
107 In July 1991, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation dissolved. On 8 December 1991, the Minsk Declaration recognised the official dissolution of the Soviet Union.
109 By the time the ninth NAM conference was held in Belgrade, the movement’s political effectiveness had largely weakened. Castro had not even attended the summit; see Robertson, International Politics since World War II, pp. 283–4.
Perception of globalisation’ rather than ‘globalisation’, because – as pointed out by several observers – the phenomenon itself was not new.

Although ‘globalisation’ is a buzzword which means different things to different people, common to most interpretations of globalisation is the notion that ‘boundaries’ (both territorial and conceptual) are fluid and increasingly less relevant. For a useful discussion of globalisation with particular emphasis on its multiple facets and on its impact on boundaries in international politics, see Camilleri and Falk, The End of Sovereignty.

The immediate neighbours were sometimes the western states themselves as in the cases of Haiti and Bosnia.

Good examples include the regional instabilities caused by the conflicts in Angola, Liberia and Central America. The stakes in the Sierra Leone conflict, for instance, were ‘high not only for the warring factions but also for the mining companies and their military counterparts.’; see C. de Jonge Oudraat, Intervention in Internal Conflicts: Legal and Political Conundrums (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Working Paper No. 15, August 2000), p. 17.

The Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, adopted on 3 October 1991 would present a sharp contrast with the normative texture of the Helsinki Final Act we have noted above: ‘The participating States emphasize that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order. They categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned’; emphasis added.

For instance, under the US leadership, the OAS formalised a ‘democracy protection doctrine’ by adopting the Santiago Declaration on 5 June 1991. Soon after its adoption, the Haiti crisis would fall within the scope of this Declaration.

As Urquhart aptly puts it, ‘The truth is that governments do not control the major forces which are shaping the future – if they ever did.’ See B. Urquhart, ‘The United Nations in 1992: problems and opportunities’, International Affairs, 68:2 (April 1992), 313.


For example, Falk uses ‘West’, ‘North’ and ‘South’ as analytical categories, but makes it amply clear throughout his study that while these are not monolithic entities, they are sufficiently homogeneous to be analytically useful; see R. A. Falk, On Humane Governance: Toward A New Global Politics (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).
For instance, during deliberations about the Angola case, as we shall see in Chapter 7, a great number of small African states participated in the Security Council deliberations.


For details of participation, see Gaer, ‘Reality check’, p. 58.

DOMREP (1965–66), the only previous experience, consisted of no more than a few military observers.


The initial resolution, which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, was SC Resolution 661 of 6 August 1990.

This operation was authorised by SC Resolution 678 dated 29 November 1990, adopted by 12 votes in favour, Cuba and Yemen against, and China abstaining.

Evans, Cooperating for Peace, p. 148.

UNIKOM was an observer mission created to monitor the demilitarised zone along the Iraq/Kuwait border. UNSCOM was set up by SC Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991 to dismantle Iraqi capabilities in weapons of mass destruction. The UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme, deriving its mandate from SC Resolution 688 of 5 April 1991, involved the establishment of UN humanitarian centres to assist in the repatriation of the Iraqi Kurds. Between August 1992 and March 1993, the UN would resort to another important enforcement operation in Iraq (Operation Southern Watch) which was intended to impose a ‘no-fly’ zone in southern Iraq below the 32nd parallel, and was based on SC Resolution 688 of 5 April 1991: see J. E. Stromseth, ‘Iraq’s repression of its civilian population: collective responses and continuing challenges’ in Damrosch (ed.), Enforcing Restraint, pp. 94–5. For a non-critical account of events, see United Nations, The United Nations and the Iraq–Kuwait Conflict, 1990–1996 (New York: UNDPI, 1996).

Between 1991 and 1995 the UN authorised peacekeeping operations in Angola (UNAVEM II and III), Bosnia and Hercegovina (UNPROFOR II, UNMIBH), Cambodia (UNAMIC, UNTAC), Chad (UNASOG), Croatia (UNPROFOR, UNCRO), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Eritrea (UNOVER), Georgia (UNOMIG), Haiti (MICIVIH, UNMIH), Liberia (UNOMIL), Macedonia (UNPREDEP), Mozambique (ONUMOZ), Rwanda (UNAMIR I, Operation Turquoise, UNAMIR II), Rwanda/Uganda (UNOMUR), Somalia (UNOSOM I, UNITAF and UNOSOM II), South Africa (UNOMSA), Tajikistan (UNMOT), and Western Sahara (MINURSO). Several of these operations were also supported by sanctions. Moreover, in relation to Libya’s involvement in the Lockerbie disaster, the Security Council for the first time authorised measures against state-backed international terrorism; see SC Resolution 748 of 31 March 1992.