



The House Magazine



Paul Stonor explains how Shield is working towards the elimination of war between sovereign states

Shield is not a peace movement nor a pressure group; no one is asked to join Shield. It is a concept – a rationale providing for a fundamental change in the relationship between the UN and the community of nations it attempts to serve.

Conceived by myself, an industrialist, promoted by John Cockcroft (former MP for Nantwich) and David Selves, an author, Shield is now seen by a growing number of public figures as being an important subject for consideration and debate. Sir Malcolm Rifkind is on record saying: "It is an interesting proposal that deserves to be discussed and debated." Likewise Alfred Cahen,

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Secretary General of the Atlantic Treaty Association has said: "Shield is a project that certainly deserves a large and detailed debate. The realisation of such a project could indeed be vital for our world in transition."

Many others have expressed similar interest or support, including Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, Sir Patrick Cormack MP, Peter Temple-Morris MP, Lord Lamont, Sir David Knox, Paul von Maltzahn (German Embassy) and Dame Margaret Anstee (United Nations).

The rationale of Shield calls for a radical extension of the United Nations Charter to empower and oblige the UN (a); to enact laws binding on all nations, such laws being initially limited to

matters of international security and (b); to create an enforcement arm to uphold the laws so enacted.

The enforcement arm would comprise a supranational council commanding a powerful military force. The council members would be drawn in equal numbers from all UN member nations, each membership being subject to the approval of the UN General Assembly. The council members would in no way be representing their respective nations, their role would be identical to that of the personnel who make up the courts in democratic nations – to decide whether or not the law has been broken and to command the subsequent actions to uphold the law.

The powerful military arm under the control of the council may be regarded as being equivalent to a democratic nation's police force whose function is to apprehend the law breaker using force if necessary.

The reader should be clear beyond all doubt that the council and its military arm would be an integral part of the United Nations and fully accountable to it. But accountability does not imply that the UN Security Council or, by parallel, a democratic government, have the right to dictate when and when not the law is to be upheld. Under the Shield rationale the UN would have enacted an international law stating that "the unauthorised military violation of a nation's sovereignty by another nation is an international crime of the first degree". Should a nation commit such a violation it would fall to the supranational council, not the UN, to decide whether or not UN law had been broken. And it would fall to the supranational council to issue a non-negotiable ultimatum to the aggressor followed, if repudiated, by decisive military intervention. Council

members who are nationals of the nations in or approaching armed conflict (and of closely allied nations) would be deprived of their vote when a poll was being taken in respect of military intervention by the council's armed forces.

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Being stateless and without towns or populations to defend, Shield would enjoy an "immunity to reciprocal devastation". Consequently, it would project the absolute certainty that non-negotiable retribution would fall upon any nation committing a material act of military aggression. Not only would such deterrence eliminate acts of aggression, it would also eliminate the emergence of military dictatorships in the first place. There would be no point in amassing arms and armed forces which if used aggressively would trigger progressive destruction of the national economy.

The implementation of Shield would not require nations to surrender one iota of their sovereignty other than the right, if a right it be, to commit acts of military aggression.

Under Shield, each nation would decide if and when it would start to reduce its own national defences.

The personnel for Shield's armed forces would be recruited on a strictly voluntary basis, open to the populations of all UN member nations. Governments would therefore be relieved of any political responsibility

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for the risks and rewards to which their citizens who volunteer would be subject by their own choice and decision. It would be advantageous if the serving members were to take on the supra-nationality of Shield for the period of their service contract.

Obtaining the acceptance of Shield's principles by the international community is frequently put forward as an insurmountable hurdle. However, no cogent reasons are advanced why a majority of the UN's member nations would vote against the adoption of Shield. The same nations would gladly accept an unconditional guarantee given by America that their sovereignty would be defended by American military power. So what is fundamentally different between a nation having its sovereignty defended by Shield forces rather than American forces?

The principle that "every nation has the right to defend itself" would, under Shield, be progressively superseded by the principle that "every nation has a right to be defended". Nations would then enjoy the same rights that citizens in democratic nations take for granted.

In 1998 Lord Jenkins of Putney raised a question in the Lords in connection with an article on Shield which appeared in *The Army Quarterly Defence Journal* and he later drew attention to the fact that Shield had the support of Mikhail Gorbachev and Jimmy Carter, ex-presidents of the late Soviet Union and of America. Baroness Symons made it clear beyond all doubt that the government found the Shield proposals totally unacceptable and consequently she saw no point in debating the subject.

Hansard records lively exchanges between the Baroness and Lord Monkswell followed by Lord Cullaghan who had written the supportive foreword to the article on Shield in *The Army Quarterly Defence Journal*, the concluding paragraph of which reads: "These are very practical problems which must be faced, but despite them nothing but good will come from people thinking about and debating these issues, and Mr Stonor makes a very useful contribution to the discussions."

The reasons given by Baroness Symons for the government's obdurate stance appear to stem from the assumption that Shield was being proposed as an independent body not connected with the UN or indeed with any other organisation. This is a total misrepresentation of Shield

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whose central objective is to enhance the powers of the UN so that it presents an absolute and certain deterrence to a would-be aggressor thus eliminating the need to enter punitive wars. It is hoped that the government can be advised of its error, perhaps by questions raised in the Commons.

The proposal will face a major problem which may prove insuperable. Shield is a radical concept and will challenge a number of fixed ideas or so-called mindsets. Those gripped by mindsets will not debate Shield – they will dismiss it; they will smother it with an avalanche of peripheral difficulties and threshold problems, none of which bears on Shield's essential principles. History is littered with the unseemly reactions of orthodoxy to radical ideas.

Why should a well-intentioned nation not welcome Shield with open arms? It is not being asked to give up any of its sovereignty – just the reverse, it is having its sovereignty guaranteed. It is not being asked to reduce its current levels of defence, it remains free to reduce them when it feels secure under the guarantee of Shield.

The logic underlying Shield will take it – and you – just so far but no further. Its final consummation will need resolve, statesmanship and vision – and the greatest of these is vision.

Paul Stonor

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