

THE UNITED NATIONS AND SHIELD

OVER RECENT YEARS, BRITISH INDUSTRIALIST PAUL STONOR HAS FUNDED THE PROMOTION OF A RATIONALE HE CONCEIVED FOR INSTITUTING ENFORCEABLE INTERNATIONAL LAW, ENACTED AND ADMINISTERED BY THE UNITED NATIONS. THE PROPOSAL, NOW KNOWN AS SHIELD, IS ABOUT TRYING TO PREVENT SOVEREIGN STATES FROM GOING TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER. AN INCREASING NUMBER OF POLITICIANS, INCLUDING A FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER AND A FORMER UK FOREIGN SECRETARY, SAY THE SHIELD CONCEPT IS WORTHY OF A FULL DEBATE. JOHN MACGILL ASKED PAUL STONOR TO EXPLAIN THE SHIELD RATIONALE.



The Shield rationale requires the UN Charter to be amended to give the General Assembly the power to enact an international law binding on all nations which declares that military aggression is an international crime of the first degree. The law would be enforced by a powerful military arm controlled neither by the Security Council nor by the General Assembly, but by a supranational Council, the members of which would each be approved and appointed by the nations. Their sole function would be to decide collectively by a majority vote whether or not the UN law has been breached and, if so, to authorise the military arm to respond accordingly if an ultimatum is repudiated. Independent of any national governments' influence, the Shield Council and its military arm would be an integral structure within the UN but mandated to act autonomously when issuing an ultimatum or taking military action to uphold UN law whenever breached. The principles underlying the enforcement of UN law would then be virtually identical to the universally accepted principles which govern law enforcement within a democracy. A parliament enacts a law and the related Courts and Police (equivalent to the Shield Council and military arm) enforce it without interference from the Government of the day. A nation contemplating taking aggressive action would know with certainty the inevitable result of breaking UN law - hence no aggression.

Being stateless and without a civilian population to defend, the Shield Council could not be threatened with retaliatory destruction of non-military targets, thus making a Shield ultimatum non-negotiable.

Civil wars or the gross abuse of human rights would require a directive from the General Assembly before Shield could intervene. Material disputes or grievances between nations must be settled by the International Court of Justice and not by a resort to armed force. If necessary, a ruling given by the Court would be enforced by Shield.

Shield would be financed by GDP-related payments to the UN from each member nation. National defence budgets could be safely reduced with Shield's guarantee in being and considerable net savings on defence spending would accrue to most nations.

So the Shield concept differs from the existing international peacekeeping role of the UN?

With Shield integrated into the UN, an act of aggression would elicit an immediate response based on pre-established law. By contrast, under its present Charter the UN would debate the aggression followed, perhaps, by a resolution being passed authorising military aid to the victim nation. But the military aid by member nations cannot

be commanded by the UN and past events have shown that, apart from America and one or two of its allies, nations are unwilling to become involved in the plight of a nation subjected to an aggressive attack. This uncertainty of there being a decisive response to aggression encourages a military dictator to gamble on inaction. With Shield it would be known that an aggressive act would trigger swift and certain retribution - hence no aggression.

The problem you mention would not arise as Shield's armed forces would be recruited on a strictly voluntary basis, open to the nationals of all UN member nations. Governments would therefore have no political responsibility for those of their citizens who freely choose to take on the risks and rewards implicit in joining Shield.

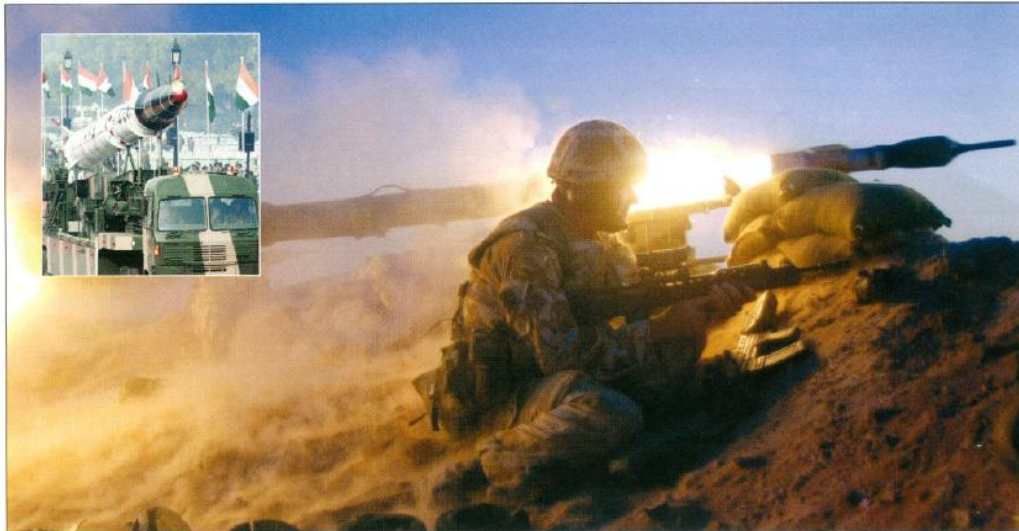
The concept of an international unit to respond to acts of armed aggression was envisaged by those who drew up the United Nations Charter. Why did such a force not become a reality? Were the huge issues of national sovereignty found to be insurmountable?

In his foreword to an article on Shield written for the 'Army Defence and Quarterly Journal' Lord (Jim) Callaghan stated:- 'When the Charter of the United Nations was agreed, those who designed it looked forward to a world system of international law but any progress was pushed into the background by the Cold War.' I think that answers the first part of your question.

As regards the 'huge issues of national sovereignty' you mention, I cannot see why any nation would consider that by having its sovereignty guaranteed by Shield it would suffer a loss of sovereignty - surely its sovereignty would be enhanced by the guarantee.

Your proposals would require up to half a million military personnel. Would they be under the command and control of the UN Security Council?

Emphatically no! That would be as self defeating as putting police and courts under the command and control of their Government. In any case, the constitution and track record of the Security Council do not qualify it to be the guardian of world peace. The permanent members of the Security Council have the power of veto and several members have, from time to time, been at war with one another. In 1962 the world faced catastrophe when two member nations of the Security Council came close to the nuclear abyss during the Cuban Missile crisis.



Some might wonder whether democracy might be by-passed by the creation of the unelected Shield Council answerable to another unelected body, the UN, which commands armed forces of several hundred thousand men and women.

By comparison, a democratic government has the power to appoint, say Chiefs of Staff to head the Army, who in turn, appoint lower ranks.

Would the Shield armed forces have access to nuclear weapons?

Nuclear weapons, both tactical and strategic, would be an essential part of Shield's armaments. A fleet of Trident type missile carrying submarines would deploy much of the strategic weaponry. The UN would impose strict rules of engagement as regards the use of nuclear weapons which would include the giving of reasonable pre-warning to targeted areas to minimise civilian casualties.

Shield would make it clear beyond all doubt that any nation using or threatening to use nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction without the authority of the UN would be subject to a nuclear strike by Shield without prior warning or ultimatum.

Last year it became clear that acts of aggression are not simply restricted to one country's army marching across a border into another country. Would the sort of defence force you envisage be rendered helpless in the face of terrorism?

Any possible defence force anyone can envisage would be helpless in the face of terrorism, especially terrorism which involves individuals ready to forfeit their lives. The lone paranoid is virtually unstoppable but organised terrorism based on collective hatred of a religion or nation can be dealt with over a period of time by removing where possible the perceived cause of the hatred.

America has done much for our world including defending us in Bosnia and Kosovo. Its only reward has been hatred - because it is seen as the world's policeman. When Shield takes over the role of World Policeman, the current hatred directed at America will fade. Shield having neither territory nor a civilian population could not be easily threatened with terrorist inspired atrocities.

All this relies on there being clear and agreed enforceable international law. Do you believe the political will exists across the world to allow the UN to draft, debate and enact such laws?

Before answering your question let me say that Shield, like any other radical proposal, faces the universal anathema to change. Habitual forms of thought become mindsets which, if challenged, will be defended by every conceivable irrelevancy as Galileo, Wilberforce, Lister, Mrs. Pankhurst and many others experienced in their time. Additionally, Shield faces the contradiction that governments expect their citizens to accept and conform to the rule of law whereas they, the governments, prefer to exempt themselves from the rule of law if it can be enforced.

My answer to the question as framed must be - no, the political will across the world does not exist at present to have Shield even debated in the UN. This must be so as Shield is not yet known across the World. However, faced with the supplementary question that, if Shield were known worldwide would it create the political will to have it debated in the UN, my answer would be affirmative provided it had the backing and blessing of several influential bodies. And in this respect, could there be a more uniquely qualified body than the European Parliament to bring this knowledge to the World?

Surely there will be MEPs who will have the vision and objectivity to see the immense benefits that would accrue to Europe and the World from the successful integration of Shield into the United Nations. The scourge of war and the fear of war which have plagued mankind since the dawn of nationhood would vanish. The obscene amounts spent on armaments would rapidly dwindle thus allowing life saving resources to be diverted to the Third World.

The European Parliament came into being by the efforts of those endowed with the vision and statesmanship to keep their eyes on the goal rather than on the insurmountable obstacles seen by the timid. The same qualities of vision and statesmanship could ensure final success for Shield.

In 1999, the Red Cross Lawyer who drew up the Humanitarian Military Code, Jean Pictet, wrote: "I'm a great-grandfather of two days. I think my great-grandson will see an organised world, with a judicial force backed by military strength that outstrips any other. I don't think there's any other solution."