

KOFI ANNAN

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U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan talks about the role of the United Nations in humanitarian aid, Kosovo, East Timor, Africa and the United States' monetary responsibility to the international organization.

GWEN IFILL: Secretary-general Kofi Annan opened this year's UN General Assembly session by calling on the international community to prepare for expanded intervention in the world, especially in countries where human rights are being violated. His speech coincided with the arrival of a U.N.-mandated force in East Timor. Mr. Annan is in Washington for meetings and speeches.

UN HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

GWEN IFILL: Mr. Annan, your speech to the UN two weeks ago, three weeks ago, you spoke of humanitarian intervention, which sounded almost like a new doctrine. Could you explain it to us, please.

KOFI ANNAN: Basically, what I tried to discuss with the member states was the fact that we live in a new era. The UN was set up after World War II, and at that point we were more concerned about interstate warfare. Today most of the wars we are concerned about are intrastate. On how we deal with interstate warfare there was a consensus and the consensus had been maintained up till now, but we are living in a new era where the conflicts are internal, and yet, we have not come up with a new consensus as to what -- how we define the common interest, who defines the common interest, how we defend the common interest, when we intervene, and when we do not. I also have to point out that in my statement I defined intervention as a broad spectrum from the least coercive to the most coercive. It could be just -- I mean, a diplomat -- you get in touch with the people in conflict and basically saying that unless we come across with some consensus, we are going to have difficulties in the Council. The Security Council on some occasions have had difficulty reaching consensus. They have had difficulty reaching consensus because different people have different understanding of what constitutes national interest or common interest, because the Council exists to protect the common interest, but what is that common interest? And if we don't have a common understanding, a broad

understanding of what we are talking about, we are not going to be able to move very quickly.

GWEN IFILL: It sounds like that common understanding or the definition of that common understanding is always going to be a roadblock to the kind of broad interventionism that you advocate.

KOFI ANNAN: I think one has to be careful. I wasn't advocating a broad intervention. What I was saying is if we have situations where there are gross violations and systematic violations of human rights, we cannot stand back and do nothing. And if we are going to intervene, we must have some criteria or some understanding of when we intervene and when we do not. Already we are accused of selectivity; we are accused of being more sensitive to crisis in some regions than the other. I don't think the UN can open itself to that sort of accusations and criticism. And I believe that if the member states were to discuss this issue simply, sincerely, and honestly, we may come to some understanding that will help us as we move forward into the future.

GWEN IFILL: Now, as you know, the United States and Britain applauded your comments; other countries, China, Russia, India, said that this smacked of imperialism. How do you answer those critics?

KOFI ANNAN: I was not surprised that some countries accepted it and others disagreed with it. But I think what is important is that in today's world, when we have the kinds of abuses that we are talking about, we need to take measures to deter them. It does not necessarily mean military intervention. In fact, the establishment of the two tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is a deterrent. The attempts by the international community to establish an international criminal court will be a deterrent, and really sending a message out to those who would commit these heinous crimes that you have nowhere to hide, you will be made accountable.

GWEN IFILL: But how do you balance out a nation's desire for its own sovereignty to protect that, its own sovereignty against an international need to intervene in the case of human rights abuses?

KOFI ANNAN: I can understand a nation's right to intervene -- I mean, to protect its sovereignty. On the other hand, let's look at the world as it exists today, I argued that the traditional concept of sovereignty is being changed by the developments in the world today, from globalization -- there are lots of areas governments do not control. They do not control the external factors that affect their economy. They do not control financial flows. They do not control some of the environmental issues. Why should abuse of human rights should be the only area that they should insist they should be allowed to control without any interference? I think this is something that happened -- and also, let me put it this way, if the citizens' rights are respected, there will be no need for anyone to want to intervene either through diplomatic means or coercive means. And it's also - I think the governments should see it not as a license for people to come in and intervene. We are talking about those situations where there are serious and gross and systematic

violations of human rights. I think that governments who protect their citizens and their rights and do not create that kind of situation have no reason to worry that anyone would intervene.

THE UN'S ROLE AS PEACEKEEPER

GWEN IFILL: Let's talk about the United Nations' role as a peacekeeper. Can the United Nations exert its role as a peacekeeper if there is not first a peace to be kept?

KOFI ANNAN: If you send in traditional peacekeepers, they cannot do it. They only can go in where there's peace to be kept, because let's not forget -- traditional peacekeepers go in lightly armed and often they go in to help implement and maintain agreements which have already been signed by the warring factions. Where the will to settle and to respect the agreements exists, the peacekeepers can do a lot.

GWEN IFILL: I'm sorry, go ahead.

KOFI ANNAN: Where the will does not exist, it's extremely difficult for traditional peacekeepers. Of course, we've also had peace enforcement, the kind of action you saw in Kosovo, which was handled by a multinational force in the form of NATO.

GWEN IFILL: When you talk about will, that's really the essential role. When you talk about handing over the rights to enforce people's -- violations of human rights concerns -- to say a regional force, rather than a UN force, or American-led force, don't you then perhaps put power in the hands of a regional bully, perhaps, to decide what a country should be doing?

KOFI ANNAN: I think that is something that the Security Council takes into consideration. It assesses the situation. It assesses the capacity of the region and also, more or less, gives an indication of what the mandate should be. In each of these instances, the recent -- take the one in East Timor, the Australian-led peacekeeping forces went in with a mandate from the Security Council, and they're reporting periodically to the Council. And I think the Council is in agreement as to the broad role that force is to play. The peace -- the force that went into Kosovo was different because it did go in without express consent of the Security Council, and so one cannot say that the Council gave them a mandate to undertake what they did.

GWEN IFILL: I want to return to East Timor in just a moment, but I want to ask also about this whole notion of intervention and civil wars. How do we know when intervention is called for, and when we're just getting ourselves involved in every civil war -- say Sierra Leone might fall into that category.

KOFI ANNAN: I think this is where my opening statement comes into focus. This is precisely some of the issues that I would want the membership at large to discuss. It's an issue for the membership to decide -- when do you intervene and why.

GWEN IFILL: Case by case?

KOFI ANNAN: And what is the rationale? Why? And this is where, in fact, I set a threshold -- you know, gross and systematic violations of human rights. In Sierra Leone, the UN did not go in directly, but we supported the work of the regional organization, the West African troops which went in -- Nigeria led. And now we're going to take over for them; we are putting in 6,000 troops from the UN who will work to ensure that the peace agreement signed in Sierra Leone would work.

THE UN'S EXPANDED ROLE

GWEN IFILL: How do you -- in East Timor or Sierra Leone or wherever you go -- how does one govern intervention once you are there? In East Timor, the United Nations, in effect, takes over for the next two years. But when can you declare your work done and leave?

KOFI ANNAN: I think each crisis is different; it has its own peculiarities and has to be tackled on its own basis and merit. In Sierra Leone there is an existing government, elected government, that was thrown out by the military and reinstated, so we will work with the government in place, obviously. We will also work to strengthen the government to help them to develop their economic and social services. In East Timor, we will be building from scratch. And we will work with the East Timorese. In time, we will organize elections for the East Timorese to elect their own leaders, and once the leaders have been installed and they've taken over the administration of the country, then our work will be done. We did that in Namibia, for example, where we organized the elections, a new government was installed, and we withdrew, and Namibia has done rather well, actually, after that. I'm not saying it happens that way in all the cases, but --

GWEN IFILL: Does the United Nations have the resources, the tools, for this expanded role?

KOFI ANNAN: Resources is always a problem, but I think where there is a will we almost always find the resources. And quite frankly, the amounts of money we are talking about in the scheme of things are really not huge amounts, considering what is at stake and what we are trying to do, whether in terms of resuscitating failed states, or protecting lives or ensuring that innocent women and children are protected and given a chance to live their lives to the fullest. We are not talking big amounts. In fact, I had to speak when we had 17 operations and 80,000 people deployed around the world, it was -- the annual budget was \$3.8 billion. \$3.8 billion when you compare with the resources we are ready to put into defense expenditure in wars is really minor.

GWEN IFILL: The Indonesian parliament is expected to vote perhaps as soon as tomorrow on whether to accept East Timor's vote of independence. Do you care to hazard a guess on how that will turn out?

KOFI ANNAN: I think they will vote yes. They will vote to confirm the results of the ballot.

GWEN IFILL: Are you confident now that you're going to be getting Indonesia's cooperation on the refugee crisis, getting people who've been driven from their homes in East Timor back from West Timor, or even Australia?

KOFI ANNAN: Our humanitarian coordinator has had very good discussions with them and the high commissioner for refugees has also worked out an arrangement with them where we are beginning to prepare to fly some of the people -- ship them -- put them on ships - and eventually by road to get them back to West -- East Timor. So far, they are cooperating. Obviously, given the conditions on the ground, there may be some difficulty, but it's gone well. It's gone well so far, and I am hopeful that they will cooperate fully.

GWEN IFILL: But the UN took a credibility blow in East Timor; the rebel leader -- or I should say the independence leader, Jose Ramos-Horta said, "I don't know how we're ever going to trust the UN again." Can they?

KOFI ANNAN: Well, I think if one says the UN took a credibility blow -- I don't know whether we took a credibility blow or the Indonesians also took a -- perhaps a much more serious blow -- what happened was we signed an agreement between Portugal and Indonesia -- what the UN witnessed. Indonesia insisted that it would assure security and there was no need for international forces to come in; and it had the capacity to do it, and it demonstrated it had the capacity and the wherewithal. On the day of the election we had a peaceful election, with the Indonesian army and police playing their role. If they could play that role effectively on 30 August, why couldn't they continue with the same seriousness and determination to maintain law and order? That did not happen, and we did have violence and nobody could have imagined would have occurred after the elections. And when that happened, the UN did not throw up its arms and said, "What do we do?" We moved very quickly to get in a force that will help bring law and order into the situation and try and get the innocent victims back to their homes from the hills and from West Timor.

THE US AND UN DUES

GWEN IFILL: I can't let you go without asking you briefly about the US role in the UN. Last week, obviously, the Senate voted against the nuclear test ban treaty, and the US continues to be of two minds about whether it will pay its back dues. What was your reaction to that vote?

KOFI ANNAN: I think it was unfortunate. My sense is that it sends the wrong message across the world. The US has a leadership role and countries around the world look up to it, particularly in the area of disarmament because it is a major power. And I think the president was right when he said the vote will send the wrong message around the world. And it does undermine the U.S.'s ability to lead in this essential area of disarmament. On your second question regarding the US dues, I often speak about this more out of sadness and disappointment than even out of anger, because the US has such a natural leadership position in the UN. People look up to the US. The US played a key role in establishing the UN, previous generations and US presidents have played a major role in making sure that the UN is strengthened. And today we have a situation where the US refuses to pay its bill, and that refusal to honor the commitments which we believe is legal and binding between us and the United States -- among its friends and its foes. In fact, it was a British foreign secretary, where Malcolm Rifkin, the former foreign secretary, who stood up in the General Assembly from the rostrum and said there should be no representation without taxation. He turned the tables, but it shows the feeling among the membership, even among friends. And so I hope the dues will be paid. Ambassador Holbrooke is working very hard. The president has also assured me that he wants it paid and is working hard. And I hope with all the effort and the energy that Ambassador Holbrooke and others have brought to bear that this year, finally, in the last year of the millennium, we can put this problem behind us and bring the US back to its natural leadership role in the organization.

GWEN IFILL: Secretary-general Kofi Annan, thank you very much.

KOFI ANNAN: Thank you.