

ted that he was reading Mr. Alter's book on Roosevelt's first 100 days as a road map of sorts – at least in terms of how to project himself.

"What you see in FDR that I hope my team can emulate is not always getting it right, but projecting a sense of confidence, and a willingness to try things," he told *60 Minutes*. "And experiment in order to get people working again."

NOT MADE TO MEASURE

The implication is that a successful or failed first 100 days translates into a successful or failed presidency. Reality is much less certain. Bill Clinton, who rode into office high on idealism but short on pragmatism, promised during his 1992 election campaign that he would "have the bills ready" right after his inauguration.

"I'll send them to Congress, and we'll have a hundred-day period," he said. "It will be the most productive period in modern history."

It wasn't, not by a long shot. His \$16-billion stimulus bill (a pittance in today's climate) was shot down, and his budget provoked a gruelling and divisive fight, as did his attempt to lift the ban on gays in the military and other initiatives that were hamstrung by a clumsy transition from the campaign to the White House.

And yet, after difficult setbacks in Congress (where Republican speaker Newt Gingrich enacted his own 100-day plan), Mr. Clinton became regarded as a successful president, winning a second term and enjoying popularity to this day in spite of scandals.

Contrast that with George W. Bush. Vilified on his way out of office in January for prosecuting the war in Iraq and presiding over economic devastation, in 2001 he was lauded by many for a well-executed first 100 days, which included the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act. The fact that he came out of the gate strongly did not prevent his later failures, Mr. Alter notes.

The same goes for Mr. Nixon, who at the start of his administration formed a "Hundred Days Group" to convince Americans that his administration was busy, and indeed won kudos for his diplomatic prowess. His formative period underscores another limitation of the 100-days model: The public often doesn't have all the facts. Mr. Nixon authorized the secret bombing of Cambodia on the 58th day of his presidency, but it wasn't until much later that word leaked out and engulfed the White House in controversy.

No one disputes that Mr. Obama has been active, eschewing the laser-like focus of Mr. Reagan for a much more diverse and ambitious agenda. But is this, as his supporters would say, an FDR-like president rising up to meet a once-in-a-generation crisis with a once-in-a-generation response? Or, as his detractors would have it, Jimmy Carter redux – a political neophyte attempting to steamroll a bogging array of ill-considered laws through Congress, with potentially drastic consequences?

He has been criticized for being either too bold with his hastily assembled package to prop up failing banks or too meek in his failure to nationalize them. He has won praise for undoing recent U.S. unilateralism with his overtures to Iran, Cuba and Russia, and si-

multaneously been vilified for consorting with terrorist sponsors.

Some former grassroots supporters fret that his mantra of "change" was just another slogan and that it's politics as usual in Washington. Meanwhile, many conservatives believe that he is using the crisis as a cover for interventionist proclivities. Political consultant Dick Morris recently suggested that "we will enter his administration as the United States, buoyed by an aggressive free-market economy. We will exit his first year – and even the first hundred days – as France, burdened with massive government regulation, a vast public sector and permanent middle-class entitlements."

Other critics on the right have become more vocal in the past several days, with George Pataki, the former Republican governor of New York, saying he was "very disappointed in these first 100 days," and radio host Rush Limbaugh airing a program he titled "Obama's Finals Week: The World Laughs at his 100 Days of Failure."

Yet Mr. Obama's first 100 days have at least helped to clarify notions about what sort of leader he is – a pragmatist, willing to reach across the partisan divide, willing to speak directly to Americans about the country's troubles (even if some believe that he should sugar-coat the message a little more) and willing to seek counsel from a wide range of quarters.

"We know something about Obama as a politician, we know what he symbolizes – but the people around him are much more of a question mark," says writer Roger Morris. "And my god, we're in uncharted territory here. Imagine how historians are going to approach this – they're going to approach it as if a dam broke, an earthquake hit."

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Political historians, though they may recoil at the crudeness of the 100-day box, do acknowledge that there is a kernel of truth here: that presidents have to act with some urgency and set the proper tone with Congress, or their administrations tend to bog down.

But this has to be balanced against a recognition of one's own limitations, insists Mr. Sorensen, the Kennedy speechwriter. When they crafted the inaugural speech that day in Palm Beach, Mr. Kennedy felt as though he had shrugged off the Roosevelt yoke with his line about a thousand days. That lasted until Day 88, when he authorized the botched invasion of Cuba.

"Kennedy found in the first 100 days that things went sour because he listened to the authors and architects of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, and he kicked himself for doing it. He learned enough not to dig the holes deeper," Mr. Sorensen recalls.

"Nobody gets to the White House until he's had a very long, arduous, uphill campaign. And finally the prize is his. It's a very heady feeling – you think you can do anything. You think you have the magic touch."

"Well," he adds, "nobody has the magic touch." Certainly not in a mere 100 days. Not even Barack Obama. *» Sinclair Stewart is a Globe and Mail correspondent based in New York.*

It's all a contrivance. All of that got fixed as one of those America myths and no one thinks to question it.

Writer and historian Roger Morris

I keep hitting hard because I know this honeymoon won't last. Every day I lose a little more political capital.

Lyndon Johnson during his first 100 days

Obama's Finals Week: The World Laughs at his 100 Days of Failure.

Title of a special broadcast by right-wing talk-radio star Rush Limbaugh

EXCERPT » THE WORLD AND DARFUR

fixing darfur

As the atrocities rage on in this troubled part of Sudan, **H. Peter Langille** argues that if a United Nations Emergency Peace Service had been in place, the conflict might never have escalated and 450,000 lives might not have been lost

What can be done to stem the ongoing crisis in Darfur? For years, the government of Sudan and the *janjaweed* militia have committed a campaign of systemic mass murder, gang rape, ethnic cleansing, "scorched earth" tactics, and frequent cross-border incursions to kill Darfur refugees in Chad.

Even after signing the Darfur Peace Agreement in May, 2006, the government of Sudan unleashed yet another offensive to conclude its efforts to "cleanse" the region. Yet, rather than the rapid reaction required in a serious emergency, the wider response to Darfur reflects a recurring pattern: routine delays, "too little, too late, too lame," and the increasingly dubious promise of "never again."

Following Rwanda and the massacre at Srebrenica, few can be confident that our existing arrangements are sufficiently reliable to save succeeding generations from the scourge of armed conflict and genocide. Regrettably, there has been little tangible progress in addressing four related challenges:

- » The prevention of armed conflict, including genocide and gross violations of human rights;
- » The protection of civilians at high risk;
- » Rapid deployment for prompt start-up of demanding peace operations; and
- » The delivery of humanitarian assistance in a volatile environment.

I argue that our existing "tool box" is far from adequate in addressing the crisis in Darfur. There is an urgent need to expand our range of instruments and options, and I suggest one key innovation: a permanent United Nations Emergency Peace Service that has the capacity to respond to similar crises ahead in a far more reliable, rapid and cost-effective manner.

The UNEPS would be a permanent UN formation, maintained at high readiness with trained, well-equipped UN personnel, immediately available once authorized by the UN Security Council.

This service would be composed of military, police and civilian elements and prepared for rapid deployment to diverse UN operations. Ideally, approximately 4,800 personnel would be located at a new UN base under a static operational headquarters and two mobile field headquarters.

Given the nature and size of this new service, it would be reserved for emergency situations, particularly to fill the gap in the initial six months when others may be unavailable, unprepared or unwilling to help. As a permanent UN service, composed of UN personnel, lead elements could be deployed within 48 hours. Furthermore, with a priority on ensuring an effective, preventive and prompt response in the early stage of a conflict, it may be sufficient to offset deadly violence. This approach would help to diminish the need for subsequent efforts and the almost routine rotation into a larger, longer multinational operation. Yet the UNEPS would also include elements to establish the groundwork for well-integrated, comprehensive and sustained efforts when necessary.

Among the deployable civilians (in teams or companies) would be medical and public-affairs units as well as experts in civilian policing; disaster relief and humanitarian assistance; human-rights monitoring and education; conflict resolution; peace-building; demining; demobilization; disarmament; reconstruction, reintegration and reconciliation; and environmental-crisis response.

A robust military composition is required in contemporary peace operations, particularly when the risks are high and the threats are real. The UNEPS must be capable of deterring belligerents and defending the mission, as well as civilians at risk. The deployable military components would include technical reconnaissance units; light armoured reconnaissance units; motorized light infantry battalions; armoured (wheeled) infantry battalions; a helicopter squadron; an engineer battalion; a logistics battalion;



This drawing is by a 13-year-old boy who witnessed conflict in Darfur between rebel groups and the *janjaweed*. It depicts a rebel soldier first shot in the arm, then executed by gunshots to the groin. The *janjaweed* are known to kill their male victims in this manner in order to emasculate them. 'They know what they are doing,' the young artist said. 'They are doing it with purpose.' This is part of a travelling exhibition of drawings by the children of Darfur. It was produced by Human Rights Watch. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

and a medical unit/hospital.

When combined, the deployable military personnel of the UNEPS would total approximately 10,000 troops.

This new service would offset much of the burden and pressure on governments, which are now reluctant to prepare and deploy their national citizens at short notice into environments of "high risk" and "low interest." Moreover, as a dedicated UN service, it would not be constrained by the need to acquire approval and meet the conditions of each participating member state. This would ensure that a reliable option was available to the UN when desperately needed. Rapid deployment is a very demanding task, one that can easily be delayed or stymied by the absence of one component.

A UNEPS of professional volunteers, located and trained at a UN base, would be the optimal way to ensure a higher level of sophistication and competence, which is essential to rapid deployment. Rather than having to organize transportation out of numerous countries around the world, staging and deployment could occur promptly out of the designated UN base.

The threshold criteria for any deployment would be authorization by the Security Council, just cause, right intention, proportional means and reasonable prospects. As the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty stresses, there is a responsibility to protect, to prevent, to react and to rebuild, particularly when there is the potential for large-scale loss of life or gross violations of human rights such as mass ethnic cleansing. These are obligations that cannot be neglected even in the early stages of a mission.

What might have been done in Darfur? There are no easy or accurate answers. At best, one can provide only informed speculation for the purpose of illustration. Under the proposal for a UNEPS sketched out here, only one of the mobile headquarters with assigned deployable elements would be available for any specific operation. Had it been available, it might have prevented the start and the escalation of the Darfur crisis.

By 2004, it would have been effective at protecting the majority of civilians in Darfur, but it would not have had sufficient capacity to maintain safety or security throughout the region.

By 2005, once the violence had escalated and spread, it would have been more effective than the designated African Union force but far from sufficient at stemming violence on its own.

Similarly, even following the Darfur Peace Agreement in

May, 2006, a UNEPS deployment would have furnished the capacity to expand and reinforce the UN mission in Sudan, possibly providing other troop contributors with sufficient encouragement and confidence to commit. Yet, even as a vanguard, bridging force, or strategic reserve to complement African Union forces, it would not have been adequate to stop any determined mobilization or attack from the Sudanese military.

At best, it would have provided a six-month tripwire that may have deterred Sudanese officials from their current campaign.

However, today the crisis in Darfur continues. Repeated warnings of a rapidly deteriorating situation, marked by more violence, systemic killing, rape and scorched-earth tactics, have not been sufficient to mobilize an effective response.

Despite a late but promising resolution from the Security Council, the UN has not been able to attract adequate national or regional troop contributors. There are few, if any, indications that the United Nations mission in Sudan will be expanded rapidly or at a level of strength sufficient to protect civilians at high risk.

At this point, the existing arrangements have repeatedly proven that they are not reliable, rapid, or effective in addressing any of the four challenges noted. Even with substantive reforms, there will remain too many inherent limitations in the African Union Standby Brigades, the UN Standby Arrangements System, the Standby High-Readiness Brigade, the EU battle groups and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Many are ashamed of and inclined to lament the crisis in Darfur. Yet "we the people" should also make a more substantive effort to ensure that the promise of "never again" is accompanied by a UN capacity to enforce "never again."

By now, it is widely evident that governments alone will not save succeeding generations from the scourge of armed conflict, genocide and war. This responsibility is now shared among us. Rather than await the next crisis, prior preparation has already helped to develop a proposal and a constituency for a UNEPS.

Without wider and deeper support, these efforts will also be insufficient. But at least there is now a viable alternative and some hope.

» From The World and Darfur: International Response to Crimes Against Humanity in Western Sudan, edited by Amanda Grzyb, copyright © 2009. Published by arrangement with McGill-Queen's University Press.

» H. Peter Langille is director of Global Common Security in London, Ont.