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ТРИБУНА МОЛОДЫХ УЧЕНЫХ**

**KOFI ANNAN – UN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HIS ROLE  
IN RESOLVING INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS**

**KOFI ANNAN-SECRETARUL GENERAL AL ONU ȘI ROLUL SĂU  
ÎN SOLUȚIONAREA CONFLICTELOR INTERNAȚIONALE**

**КОФИ АННАН – ГЕНЕРАЛЬНЫЙ СЕКРЕТАРЬ ООН И ЕГО РОЛЬ  
В РАЗРЕШЕНИИ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ КОНФЛИКТОВ**

ĎURIŠOVÁ Tatiana\* / ĎURIŠOVÁ Tatiana / ДУРИШОВА Татьяна

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3989-3780>

**ABSTRACT:**

**KOFI ANNAN – UN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HIS ROLE  
IN RESOLVING INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS**

This paper analyses Kofi Annan's contribution as UN Secretary-General (1997-2006) to the prevention and resolution of international conflicts. The study focuses on his diplomatic initiatives, reform efforts within the UN system, and his personal approach to peacebuilding. It reviews selected cases such as Kosovo, Iraq and Darfur and discusses Annan's role in shaping global norms of multilateral diplomacy and humanitarian intervention.

The article concludes that Kofi Annan has significantly changed the UN peace agenda by promoting human security and preventive diplomacy as central principles of global governance.

**Key words:** Kofi Annan, United Nations, diplomacy, conflict resolution, peacekeeping.

**JEL Classification:** K33; F50

**Universal Decimal Classification:** 327.7; 341.1

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**REZUMAT:**

**KOFI ANNAN-SECRETARUL GENERAL AL ONU ȘI ROLUL SĂU  
ÎN SOLUȚIONAREA CONFLICTELOR INTERNAȚIONALE**

Această lucrare analizează contribuția lui Kofi Annan în calitate de Secretar General al ONU (1997-2006) la prevenirea și soluționarea conflictelor internaționale. Studiul se concentrează pe inițiativele sale

\* **Mgr. ĎURIŠOVÁ Tatiana** - Studentă-doctorandă, Departamentul de științe politice, Universitatea Alexander Dubček din Trenčín, Trenčín, Slovacia (Republica Slovacă). / **Mgr. ĎURIŠOVÁ Tatiana** - PhD student, Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín (Trenčín, The Slovak Republic). / **ДУРИШОВА Татьяна** - Аспирантка, Департамент политологии Тренчинского университета имени Александра Дубчека (Тренчин, Словацкая Республика). **E-mail:** [tatiana.ondrusova@student.tnuni.sk](mailto:tatiana.ondrusova@student.tnuni.sk) ; [ondrusova.t@gmail.com](mailto:ondrusova.t@gmail.com) ; <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3989-3780>

diplomatice, eforturile de reformă în cadrul sistemului ONU și abordarea sa personală în ceea ce privește consolidarea păcii. Acesta analizează cazuri selectate, cum ar fi Kosovo, Irak și Darfur și discută rolul lui Annan în modelarea normelor globale ale diplomației multilaterale și intervenției umanitare.

Articolul concluzionează că Kofi Annan a schimbat semnificativ agenda de pace a ONU prin promovarea securității umane și a diplomației preventive ca principii centrale ale guvernărilor globale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Kofi Annan, Organizația Națiunilor Unite, diplomație, rezolvarea conflictelor, menținerea păcii.

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РЕЗЮМЕ:

# КОФИ АННАН – ГЕНЕРАЛЬНЫЙ СЕКРЕТАРЬ ООН И ЕГО РОЛЬ В РАЗРЕШЕНИИ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ КОНФЛИКТОВ

В данной статье анализируется вклад Кофи Аннана на посту Генерального секретаря ООН (1997-2006) в предотвращение и урегулирование международных конфликтов. Основное внимание в исследовании уделяется его дипломатическим инициативам, усилиям по реформированию системы ООН и его личному подходу к миростроительству. В нем рассматриваются отдельные случаи, такие как Косово, Ирак и Дарфур, и обсуждается роль Аннана в формировании глобальных норм многосторонней дипломатии и гуманитарной интервенции.

В статье делается вывод о том, что Кофи Аннан существенно изменил мирную повестку дня ООН, продвигая безопасность человека и превентивную дипломатию в качестве центральных принципов глобального управления.

**Ключевые слова:** Кофи Аннан, Организация Объединенных Наций, дипломатия, разрешение конфликтов, миротворчество.

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## 1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) is a key institution of the international system, the main objective of which is to maintain peace and security, promote cooperation between states and promote the principles of international law. Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has undergone several stages of development and reforms, reflecting the changing geopolitical conditions and new challenges of a globalized world<sup>1</sup>. It is headed by the Secretary-General – the highest administrative representative and the symbolic voice of the international community<sup>2</sup>.

The function of the Secretary-General is extremely complex, as it brings together the administrative, political and ethical aspects of leadership. The Secretary-General is not only the head of the UN Secretariat, but also acts as a mediator in conflict situations, an initiator of diplomatic negotiations and an advocate of a multilateral approach to solving global problems. Its authority is not based on formal executive powers, but on its ability to influence member states through trust, diplomatic skill and moral integrity<sup>3</sup>. That is why he is often referred to as a world diplomat or the moral voice of the international community<sup>4</sup>.

This understanding of the Secretary-General's function was embodied by Kofi Atta Annan, the seventh UN Secretary-General, who led the organization from 1997 to 2006. A native of Ghana, he

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Luck, E. C. (2006). *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Annan, K. (2012). *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. London: Penguin Press.

has held a number of leadership positions during his career of more than forty years – from administrative tasks to the management of peacekeeping operations. These experiences allowed him to know in detail the inner workings of the organization and became the basis for his later reform initiatives<sup>1</sup>. His rise to office symbolized the UN's transition to a new era – the post-Cold War era, which brought new threats: regional conflicts, ethnic violence, humanitarian crises, terrorism and state failure<sup>2</sup>.

Since the beginning of his mandate, Kofi Annan has focused on strengthening the effectiveness and credibility of the UN. He advocated the reform of the collective security system, the modernisation of internal governance and the link between peace, development and human rights. His approach was based on the conviction that peace and development are inextricably linked to human security, and that lasting peace is not possible without a dignified life for the individual<sup>3</sup>.

During Annan's tenure, the UN faced several serious trials – the war in Kosovo (1999), the invasion of Iraq (2003) and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur (2004). Despite his limited powers, the Secretary-General was heavily involved in finding diplomatic solutions, mediating negotiations and strengthening the moral dimension of international politics. His diplomatic style – based on patience, quiet diplomacy and the search for consensus – has earned him respect not only at the United Nations but also on the global stage<sup>4</sup>. In 2001, Kofi Annan and the United Nations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to create a more orderly and peaceful world<sup>5</sup>.

Annan's tenure is often referred to as the U.N.'s decade of transformation, during which the organization sought to adapt to a changing world of globalization, regional conflicts, and new security challenges. The reforms he initiated aimed to streamline decision-making processes, increase transparency, strengthen cooperation with regional organisations (in particular the African Union and the European Union) and restore public trust in the UN<sup>6</sup>.

The aim of the article is to analyze the role of Kofi Annan as UN Secretary-General in resolving international conflicts in the years 1997-2006, to evaluate his contribution to the development of the concept of preventive diplomacy and reform of the UN system, and to point out the main challenges he faced.

The article is based on an analysis of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are mainly official UN documents – the Secretary-General's annual reports, Kofi Annan's speeches to the UN General Assembly, and reports on peace and security. Secondary sources are professional publications, academic articles and analytical studies on the work of the UN and the role of the Secretary-General in international relations.

A comparative and descriptive-analytical method was used – comparing Annan's approaches in various conflict situations and analyzing them in the context of the broader development of international relations. The research is complemented by a qualitative content analysis of selected UN documents and speeches, with the aim of revealing the main themes and value frameworks that Annan advocated.

The research conceived in this way allows for a comprehensive assessment of the significance of Annan's work for the UN and at the same time reflects on his personal contribution to the formation of the current international order.

## **2. Kofi Annan's career and accession to the post of UN Secretary-General**

Kofi Atta Annan was born on April 8, 1938 in Kumasi, Ghana (then the British colony of the Gold Coast) into a family with a tradition of public service. He grew up in an aristocratic family, in which his grandfathers and uncles held the position of chiefs. His father was the chief of the Fante

<sup>1</sup> Annan, K. (2000). *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>3</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>4</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>5</sup> Nobel Committee. (2001). *The Nobel Peace Prize 2001: Kofi Annan and the United Nations*. Oslo: Norwegian Nobel Institute

<sup>6</sup> Annan, K. (1997). *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. New York: United Nations.

tribe and an important figure in the regional government. Thanks to his family background and emphasis on education, Kofi Annan gained access to the international environment and liberal education at a young age<sup>1</sup>.

He began his university studies at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, from where he later received a scholarship to Macalester College in the US state of Minnesota, where he graduated in 1961 with a degree in economics. After graduation, he continued his postgraduate education at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and later at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he focused on management and administrative management<sup>2</sup>. This combination of economic and managerial education later proved to be crucial in his reform efforts at the United Nations.

Annan joined the United Nations in 1962 as an administrative officer at the World Health Organization (WHO). Over the following decades, he held several positions within the UN system – he worked for the Office for Refugees (UNHCR), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Office for Budget and Human Resources Planning. In the 1980s, he also worked outside the UN – in the international organization World Health Organization Financing and Administration in Switzerland<sup>3</sup>.

In the 1990s, his career shifted significantly – in 1993 he was appointed Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. In this capacity, he was directly involved in the management of several UN missions, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia and Rwanda. It was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which took place during his term of office, that became a profound personal and professional turning point. The UN has been criticised for its inaction, but Annan has spoken openly about the need to strengthen the UN's ability to respond to mass human rights violations<sup>4</sup>. This moment significantly shaped his future understanding of the organization's role in humanitarian intervention and conflict prevention.

During his tenure as Head of Peacekeeping Operations, Annan has proven himself to be a diplomat with a balanced, rational and inclusive approach. He had a reputation as a person who could maintain contact with the great powers, but at the same time maintain an independent attitude. When a successor to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali began to be discussed in the Security Council in 1996, Annan became a candidate for compromise – he was supported mainly by the United States, which did not agree with the Egyptian leader's continuation in a second term<sup>5</sup>. After a series of negotiations, he was elected by the UN General Assembly as the seventh Secretary-General on 17 December 1996 and officially took office on 1 January 1997.

His election represented both a symbolic and a political breakthrough, with Annan becoming the first Secretary-General from the ranks of career UN officials and the second African to hold the post (after Boutros Boutros-Ghali). At a time when the UN was facing criticism for its inefficiency and bureaucracy, his selection was seen as a hope for reform and restoring public trust in the organization<sup>6</sup>.

Immediately after taking office, Annan presented a comprehensive reform program for the United Nations, aimed at streamlining administrative processes, strengthening cooperation with regional organizations, and expanding the UN's mandate in the field of development and human rights.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning of his term, Kofi Annan thus profiled himself as a reformer and visionary, who tried to combine the administrative management of the organization with the ethical dimension of international politics. His diplomatic style, characterized by patience, an emphasis on consensus

<sup>1</sup> Annan, K. (2012). *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. London: Penguin Press

<sup>2</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Annan, K. (2012). *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. London: Penguin Press.

<sup>4</sup> Annan, K. (2000). *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> Luck, E. C. (2006). *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise*. New York: Routledge

<sup>6</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>7</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations



and the ability to communicate with different actors, earned him respect on the international stage. Already in the first years of his mandate, he had to deal with difficult challenges, such as the crisis in Kosovo or the question of the international legitimacy of military interventions, which became the central topic of his further work.

### **3. Kofi Annan and the reform of the United Nations system**

#### **3.1. The need for post-Cold War reform of the UN**

The end of the Cold War brought about a fundamental transformation of the international environment, in which the United Nations had to adapt to new conditions. The bipolar world system, which paralysed the activities of the UN Security Council for many decades, has disintegrated and opened up space for a more active operation of the organization in the field of peacekeeping missions and conflict prevention. At the same time, however, new challenges – ethnic wars, the collapse of states, terrorism, climate change and the growth of social inequalities – have highlighted the UN's limited readiness to respond comprehensively and effectively<sup>1</sup>.

In the mid-1990s, the UN found itself in a crisis of confidence. Critics pointed to bureaucratic inefficiency, slow decision-making and a lack of transparency. The failures of peacekeeping missions in Rwanda and Bosnia have raised questions about the legitimacy of the organization and its ability to ensure international security. After taking office as Secretary-General in 1997, Kofi Annan realized that if the UN was to remain relevant, it needed to undergo a fundamental internal reform that would strengthen its performance, credibility and adaptability<sup>2</sup>.

#### **3.2. The 1997 Reform Programme**

Shortly after his election, Annan presented "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (1997), which became the basis of his reform strategy. The aim of the programme was to streamline the functioning of the organisation, strengthen coordination between individual bodies and simplify the administrative structure.

Key actions included:

- Reduction of the number of management levels and merging of duplicate departments,
- Introduction of performance evaluation of the Secretariat's employees,
- Establishment of the position of Deputy Secretary-General – in order to relieve Annan of operational tasks,
- Increasing transparency and financial discipline through internal audits,
- Strengthening cooperation with regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU).

The 1997 reform was considered the most extensive since the creation of the United Nations. Annan focused not only on administrative changes, but also on changing the culture within the organization – he wanted the UN to stop being seen as a rigid bureaucratic institution and become a flexible tool for international diplomacy<sup>3</sup>.

#### **3.3. 'We the Peoples' – a UN for the 21st century**

In 2000, Kofi Annan presented a seminal document entitled "*We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*", which became a kind of manifesto of his vision of the role of the UN in a globalized world. This strategic text emphasized that the organization must respond not only to military but also to economic, environmental and social challenges that threaten the security of people.

Several key concepts emerged in the report:

- Human Security – the security of a person, not just the state, as a fundamental principle;
- Conflict prevention – the need for early warning and diplomatic action before the outbreak of violence;
- Globalisation and justice – the need for a fair sharing of the benefits of globalisation;

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>2</sup> Annan, K. (2000). *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Cooperation between States and civil society – the UN as a platform that connects governments, non-governmental organizations, the business sector and individuals.

In the spirit of these ideas, in the same year, he also presented the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which defined eight global development goals by 2015 – from fighting poverty to improving education, health and women's empowerment. This program was one of the most striking outcomes of the Annan era, as it linked development policy to security and stability issues<sup>1</sup>.

### **3.4. Reform of the security system and peacekeeping missions**

Annan paid special attention to the reform of the system of collective security and peacekeeping operations. The experience in Rwanda and Bosnia convinced him that the UN must have better mechanisms to protect civilians and make decisions faster in crisis situations.

Therefore, in 2000, the so-called Brahimi Report (*Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*) was created, which contained recommendations for improving the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping missions. Annan fully supported them and implemented a number of measures, such as:

- introduction of Rapid Deployment Capacity,
- strengthening training and coordination between Member States;
- clearer mandates for peacekeeping missions;
- the creation of an integrated planning and evaluation system<sup>2</sup>.

These reforms have helped to increase the number and quality of UN peacekeeping operations, almost doubling during Annan's tenure and expanding to areas such as Sierra Leone and Liberia<sup>3</sup>.

### **3.5. Transparency, ethics and public trust**

One of Annan's priorities was to restore moral trust in the United Nations. After a series of scandals involving the misuse of funds or inefficient management, he promoted the principles of ethical responsibility and zero tolerance for corruption. In 1999, he created the Office of Internal Oversight Services to ensure control over the use of the budget and the activities of employees.

However, his efforts at transparency were undermined in 2004 when the so-called Oil-for-Food scandal broke out, which concerned Iraq's humanitarian aid program. Despite the fact that Annan's personal misconduct was not proven, the scandal significantly damaged the reputation of the UN. Annan responded openly – acknowledging systemic failures and pushing for stricter control mechanisms, reinforcing the emphasis on accountability and ethics in the functioning of the organization<sup>4</sup>.

### **3.6. Significance and impact of Annan's reforms**

Annan's reforms have fundamentally influenced the direction of the United Nations in the 21st century. It has succeeded in modernising the organisation's institutional functioning, strengthening its global legitimacy and linking peace, development and human rights issues into a single framework.

His reformist philosophy was based on the idea that peace cannot be maintained without development and development without peace, and that both of these goals are unsustainable without respect for human dignity<sup>5</sup>. Although not all reforms were successful and some initiatives met with resistance from the great powers, Kofi Annan was able to promote the idea of the UN as an active and moral actor in global politics – not just a bureaucratic institution.

## **4. Kofi Annan and international conflict resolution**

Kofi Annan's term of office (1997-2006) was marked by growing instability in the international environment. Despite the end of the Cold War, the world did not experience the expected era of peace, but a series of regional conflicts, ethnic cleansing, terrorist attacks, and humanitarian catastrophes. During this period, the limits of the UN as an organization became apparent –

<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2000). *Millennium Development Goals*. New York: UN

<sup>2</sup> Brahimi, L. (2000). *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Luck, E. C. (2006). *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise*. New York: Routledge

<sup>4</sup> Annan, K. (2012). *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. London: Penguin Press

<sup>5</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations

dependence on the will of the great powers, slow decision-making processes or disputes about the legitimacy of interventions. In this situation, Kofi Annan acted as a moral authority and diplomatic mediator, trying to maintain a balance between the principle of state sovereignty and the need to protect the civilian population.

The following subchapters deal with three key cases that best illustrate his approach: Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003) and Sudan/Darfur (2004–2005).

#### **4.1. Conflict v Kosove (1999)**

The crisis in Kosovo represented the first major test of Annan's leadership. After the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, tensions between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians resulted in violent clashes and ethnic cleansing. In March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched air strikes against Serbia without the approval of the UN Security Council because Russia and China threatened to veto.

Kofi Annan found himself in an extremely sensitive situation. On the one hand, he emphasized that *"intervention without a mandate from the Security Council is not in accordance with the UN Charter"*, but at the same time pointed out that *"inaction in the event of a humanitarian catastrophe would be morally unacceptable"*.<sup>1</sup> His position became the basis for the later doctrine of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), which recognizes that if a state is unable to protect its citizens from genocide or crimes against humanity, the international community has the right – and the duty – to act.

After the end of the war, the UN played a key role in stabilizing the region through the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Annan advocated civil governance and the building of democratic institutions as the basis for long-term peace. Despite the political controversies, the Kosovo operation has become a model for future international interventions with a humanitarian goal<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, however, the Kosovo crisis has revealed the limits of the Secretary-General's position. Annan could call, appeal and mediate, but he had no real power to prevent the military actions of the great powers. Nevertheless, it was thanks to his balanced attitude that the UN became a key player in the restoration of peace and territorial administration after the conflict<sup>3</sup>.

#### **4.2. Invasion of Iraq (2003)**

Iraq was one of the most difficult moments of Annan's career. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, international policy focused on the fight against terrorism, with the George W. Bush administration accusing Iraq of possessing weapons of mass destruction. In March 2003, the United States and Great Britain launched the military operation "Iraqi Freedom" without the approval of the UN Security Council.

Kofi Annan has repeatedly warned that the action *"is not in accordance with the UN Charter"* and that *"no government has the right to unilaterally decide on the use of force"*.<sup>4</sup> With this stance, he got into direct conflict with Washington, but at the same time he gained the recognition of the majority of the international community.

After the invasion began, Annan sought to minimize divisions within the United Nations and promote the country's humanitarian reconstruction. He established the United Nations Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to assist with the country's political transition, including the preparation of elections and the constitution. However, in August 2003, the mission in Baghdad was attacked by terrorists, killing the UN special envoy Sérgio Vieira de Mello – a close associate of Annan. This event deeply shook the entire organization and led to a reassessment of security measures for all civilian missions<sup>5</sup>.

Annan's criticism of the invasion and emphasis on multilateral decision-making reinforced the image of the UN as a moral counterweight to the unilateral use of force. At the same time, however,

<sup>1</sup> Annan, K. (1999). *Statement on the Situation in Kosovo*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>3</sup> Luck, E. C. (2006). *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise*. New York: Routledge

<sup>4</sup> Annan, K. (2004). *Interview with the BBC on the Legality of the Iraq War*. BBC News, 16 September 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Annan, K. (2012). *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. London: Penguin Press.

they have shown that without the consent of the great powers, the Secretary-General has only a limited opportunity to influence the direction of global politics.

#### **4.3. Sudan-Darfur conflict (2004-2005)**

In 2003, one of the worst humanitarian conflicts of the early 21st century broke out in the western Sudanese region of Darfur. Military units and the 'Janjaweed' militia led by the Sudanese government have attacked the civilian population, resulting in an estimated more than 300,000 casualties. The UN has faced criticism for its slow response and limited measures.

Kofi Annan, learning from the experience of Rwanda, immediately warned of the threat of genocide and called on the international community to act together. He actively supported the African Union (AU), which was the first to send peacekeepers to the region. Subsequently, he pushed for the creation of a joint UN-AU mission – UNAMID (2007), which became one of the largest peacekeeping operations in the history<sup>1</sup> of the UN.

Darfur has become a symbol of Annan's philosophy of human security – that is, the understanding of peace as a state in which the lives of individuals are protected, not just the borders of states. Although the UN was unable to completely stop the conflict, Annan's initiative contributed to strengthening the concept of Responsibility to Protect, which was later officially adopted at the UN World Summit in 2005<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4.4. Further diplomatic missions and peace mediation**

In addition to major crises, Annan also played an important role in many regional disputes:

- in Sierra Leone (1999-2000), supported the peace process after the civil war and the creation of the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone;
- in East Timor (1999), coordinated the independence and transition process under the administration of the United Nations (UNTAET);
- in Lebanon (2000), mediated negotiations between Israel and Hezbollah on the cessation of military operations.

These cases illustrate that Annan advocated a multilateral and dialogical approach, preferring quiet diplomacy, face-to-face negotiations, and cooperation with regional actors. His style contrasted with the confrontational methods of some states and represented a model of "soft power" in practice.

#### **4.5. Assessing Annan's role in conflict resolution**

Annan's work in crisis situations has shown that the UN Secretary-General can be a major actor in global politics despite his limited powers. His diplomatic approach combined pragmatism and a moral dimension, seeking to seek consensus among the great powers.

Historically, Annan is credited with:

- strengthening the role of the UN as a mediation actor;
- enforcement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine;
- expanding the concept of human security,
- emphasising preventive diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution;
- linking peacekeeping missions to development and human rights programmes.

However, his critics pointed out that many initiatives remained only at the level of declarations and the UN was often unable to agree on specific steps. Nevertheless, Annan managed to maintain the authority of the organization during a period when its legitimacy was seriously questioned<sup>3</sup>.

After the end of his mandate (2006), Annan continued his mediation activities – for example as UN and Arab League Special Envoy for Syria (2012). This also proves that his name has become synonymous with credible and neutral diplomacy.

### **5. Annan's concept of multilateralism, human security and the legacy of its action**

#### **5.1. Multilateralism as a fundamental principle of world politics**

One of the pillars of Kofi Annan's diplomatic thinking was multilateralism – the belief that global problems can only be solved through cooperation between several states and international

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>2</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations

<sup>3</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press



institutions.

Annan repeatedly emphasized that *"no state, no matter how powerful, can face the threats of a globalized world alone."*<sup>1</sup>

This approach was reflected in several aspects of his work. First, Annan sought to strengthen the role of the UN as a forum for collective decision-making, where even small states would have a voice in shaping international policy. Secondly, it promoted the UN's cooperation with regional organisations, in particular the African Union, the European Union, the Organisation of American States and ASEAN. Third, it has expanded the concept of multilateral diplomacy to include the participation of non-state actors – NGOs, academia and the private sector.

In 1999, he introduced the UN Global Compact<sup>2</sup>, which was to bring the UN together with the business sector on issues of sustainable development, business ethics and human rights. This project became one of the most successful initiatives of Annan's mandate and today brings together thousands of companies from more than 160 countries<sup>3</sup>.

Annan's multilateralism had not only an institutional dimension, but also a moral one. He emphasized the need for international solidarity and joint action in the face of global threats such as climate change, poverty and terrorism. In a speech at the UN World Summit in 2005, he stressed that multilateralism is not an option, but a necessity at a time when problems transcend national borders<sup>4</sup>.

### **5.2. The concept of human security and the 'responsibility to protect'**

Kofi Annan has made a major contribution to the expansion of the traditional understanding of security. In the spirit of his motto "freedom from fear and freedom from want", he formulated the concept of human security, which promotes that true security does not consist only in the absence of war, but in the protection of basic human rights, access to food, health, education and a dignified life<sup>5</sup>.

In the report *We the Peoples* (2000) and in the document *In Larger Freedom* (2005), he stated that *"without development there is no security and without security there is no development"*. This approach brought together peace, development and human rights policies into a single framework and became the basis of the United Nations Post-2000 Development Agenda.

The most striking manifestation of this philosophy was the support of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. Drawing on the experience of Rwanda and Bosnia, Annan argued that the international community has a moral and legal obligation to intervene when a state fails to protect its citizens from genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity. This principle was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005 and became one of the most important shifts in international law after World War II<sup>6</sup>.

Although the application of the R2P doctrine remains controversial (e.g. in Libya or Syria), its birth is directly linked to Annan's vision of the UN as an active guarantor of human dignity.

### **5.3. Moral diplomacy and values-based leadership**

Unlike his predecessors, Annan understood the role of secretary-general not only as an administrative function, but as moral leadership. His speeches and activities were dominated by concepts such as trust, responsibility, solidarity, peace and human dignity.

In 2001, when receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, he declared:

<sup>1</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations, p.7

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. *UN Global Compact: Annual Review*. New York: UN Publications, 2010

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). (2000). *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>4</sup> Annan, K. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York: United Nations

<sup>5</sup> Annan, K. (2000). *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. New York: United Nations

<sup>6</sup> Bellamy, A. J. (2009). *Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to End Mass Atrocities*. Cambridge: Polity Press

*"The life mission of the United Nations is to protect humanity – from war, hatred and senseless suffering. Our actions must be guided by a moral compass, not by the interests of the powerful."*<sup>1</sup>

Annan often spoke of the need for quiet diplomacy – resolving conflicts through patient negotiation and building trust instead of confrontation. His style was characterized by humility, detachment and an emphasis on dialogue, which earned him a reputation as a mediator who was respected by all parties, including states with different interests.

As a result, he has become a rare example of moral authority in international politics, where geopolitical calculations often dominate. His leadership has shown that even in an environment of limited powers, the UN Secretary-General can act as an important normative actor shaping global values<sup>2</sup>.

#### **5.4. Legacy and significance of Annan's work**

After the end of his mandate in 2006, Kofi Annan remained active in the field of international diplomacy and development. He founded the Kofi Annan Foundation, which is dedicated to promoting peace, democratic governance and sustainable development. In 2012, he was appointed UN and Arab League Special Envoy for Syria, where he tried to mediate a political solution to the civil war.

Kofi Annan's legacy can be summarized in three basic levels:

1. Institutional level: modernised the UN, strengthened its effectiveness and ability to respond to crises;
2. Normative level: it has enforced the principles of responsibility to protect, human security and global solidarity;
3. Ethical level: he returned moral authority and an emphasis on universal values to the organization.

His tenure also influenced later Secretaries-General, in particular António Guterres, who continues to promote the concepts of sustainable development and multilateralism. As Thomas Weiss<sup>3</sup> Annan notes, *"he left the UN in a better state than he took it over – stronger in ideals, though not always in power."*

#### **6. Conclusion and Overall Summary**

Kofi Annan's term of office (1997-2006) was one of the most significant stages in the history of the United Nations. After taking office at a time of profound global change, Annan was faced with the task of restoring the credibility, effectiveness and moral authority of the United Nations, which had been weakened after the Cold War. His tenure has shown that, even within limited powers, the Secretary-General can play a key role in resolving international conflicts, shaping norms of global behaviour and promoting the values of human dignity and solidarity.

Kofi Annan was a secretary general who brought together a reformist administrator, a diplomat and a moral leader. He proved that the success of the United Nations lies not only in the power of the member states, but also in the ability of the organization's leadership to promote principles that transcend national interests. Its 1997 reforms and *the We the Peoples* programme (2000) have fundamentally influenced the direction of the UN in the 21st century – linking the issues of peace, development and human rights into a single framework that has become the basis of the current concept of sustainable peace and development.

In the field of conflict resolution, Annan advocated strengthening preventive diplomacy and UN peacekeeping missions. In the cases of Kosovo, Iraq and Darfur, it has shown a balanced approach, trying to combine respect for international law with the protection of human life. Although he faced political restrictions and criticism, his work contributed significantly to the promotion of the principle of Responsibility to Protect, which became the new standard in international relations.

<sup>1</sup> Nobel Committee. (2001). *The Nobel Peace Prize 2001: Kofi Annan and the United Nations*. Oslo: Norwegian Nobel Institute

<sup>2</sup> Chesterman, S. (2007). *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, T. G. (2009). *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p.142

At the same time, Kofi Annan developed a modern concept of human security that understands peace not only as the absence of war, but as a state in which the basic needs, rights and dignity of the human person are ensured. This approach fundamentally influenced the philosophy of later UN initiatives, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Annan's multilateralism was based on the belief that global problems could not be solved unilaterally. He built the UN as a forum for dialogue and cooperation, in which states, regional organizations and non-state actors have their place. His UN Global Compact has shown that responsibility for peace and development lies not only with politics, but also with the private sector and civil society.

Although not all of his reforms were successful and some conflicts could not be stopped, Annan's contribution lies in the fact that he has shifted the UN from an institution that responds to crises to an organization that seeks to prevent them. It has restored the moral dimension of the UN that distinguishes it from other international actors, and has left a legacy that diplomacy based on values and human dignity still has its place in today's world.

His vision of peace as a link between security, development and human rights remains relevant today, at a time of rising geopolitical tensions, humanitarian crises and climate threats. Annan's leadership showed that effective international politics must be not only rational but also ethical.

The article analyzed Kofi Annan's tenure as UN Secretary-General from 1997 to 2006, focusing on his role in resolving international conflicts and his reform activities.

The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- Annan undertook the most extensive institutional reform of the UN since its inception, focused on efficiency, transparency and cooperation with regional organizations.
- Through the documentaries *We the Peoples* (2000) and *In Larger Freedom* (2005), he laid the foundations for a new philosophy of international security, based on human dignity and development.
- In resolving the conflicts in Kosovo, Iraq and Darfur, he advocated peaceful and diplomatic solutions, stressing the legitimacy of international law.
- He has made a significant contribution to the formulation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle and to the development of the concept of human security.
- His period marked a shift in the understanding of the role of the UN Secretary-General – from an administrator to an active mediator and moral leader.

In conclusion, Kofi Annan left a lasting legacy as a reformer, humanist and diplomat who combined the ideals of peace, justice and solidarity into a single framework of global governance. His work confirms that even in the complex world of international politics, the values and vision of an individual can fundamentally influence the course of history.

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**Contacte / Contacts / Контакты:**

**Mgr. ĐURIŠOVÁ Tatiana.**

PhD student, Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín,  
Trenčín, The Slovak Republic.

**E-mail:** [tatiana.ondrusova@student.tnuni.sk](mailto:tatiana.ondrusova@student.tnuni.sk) ; [ondrusova.t@gmail.com](mailto:ondrusova.t@gmail.com) ;

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3989-3780>

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