

9. THE UN AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Global citizenship implies some sense of belonging to a larger political community than that of our own state alone. Global citizens believe they have duties beyond borders. Their concept of *rights* also extends internationally. It is concerned, in principle and in practice, with the protection of human dignity in several forms; such as human rights and the struggle to escape from poverty, lack of education and poor health that blight the lives of the global majority.

Global citizenship also implies a commitment to maintaining international peace and security within the system of states. The terrible violence unleashed by two world wars during the last century has led to calls for the instrument of warfare to be placed beyond national use, preserving it solely for purposes of collective security.

Global citizenship is also concerned with the good government of our shared environmental resources such as the climate system, the ozone layer and the high seas. These are beyond the ability of any one country to protect but are vulnerable to any one nation's ability to inflict damage.

The twentieth century witnessed two attempts to give institutional expression to these principles of wider citizenship, collective security and environmental protection. The League of Nations was created in 1919 with a very limited mandate to maintain the peace, and a limited membership base as colonial rule still prevailed in the Third World.

Its successor after the Second World War, the United Nations, was formally created at the San Francisco Conference of June 1945. Its subsequent growth to embrace 190 Member States has created the largest, and most nearly universal, membership international organisation in the world. In a fascinat-

ing history over nearly sixty years the UN has been the repository of many great ambitions for the improvement of the human condition. The hopes and fears of all the years have been brought to and played out in the General Assembly of all members in New York. Decolonisation, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, nuclear non-proliferation, numerous peace-keeping operations and global conferences such as the Rio Earth Summit all emerged from UN initiatives. As will be shown, a wide range of functions from military security to collaborative scientific research are organised by the UN. That said, the organisation is also subject to much criticism of its limited efficiency and political disputes in attempting to develop norms and ideals into operational forms of global governance. Riven for over 40 years by Cold War tensions between its leading members, a decade of recent attention has focused on the role of the UN in delivering imaginative solutions and good government on a range of post-Cold War issues. Whilst this account of the UN's record is critical, it would be remarkable if an unreformed political institution created over fifty years ago was not capable of improvement. We would not indulge a government, a university or a corporation's claims to have been created perfect, and to have stayed perfect for half a century. Neither should we be afraid to criticise the UN. It is in a spirit of constructive engagement for the reform of the UN that this chapter will highlight the many deficiencies of the organisation.

The 'Atlantic Charter' of post-war aims, agreed by British Prime Minister Churchill and US President Roosevelt as early as August 1941, referred to the need for a post-war security organisation, and in January 1942 twenty-six allied nations signed the 'Declaration by United Nations'. These origins and dates are crucial to understanding the basis upon which the UN was founded as an inter-governmental organisation, and the limitations which those origins placed on its subsequent development. The UN was created in wartime, as an exercise in allied solidarity, to create an instrument of post-war international order. Its principal designers were the great powers of that time; American, Soviet, British and Chinese delegations drafted the UN Charter in strict secrecy at Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington DC, in 1944. The UN was created at a time of anticipated US-USSR alliance, two months before the first use of the atomic bomb, over Hiroshima on 4 August 1945. It was created at a time when just fifty-one sovereign states constituted the membership of the international political system. The UN's pre-Cold War, pre-atomic and pre-Third World origins are still embedded in its contemporary structure and partly explain the near impossibility of its reform (Mingst and Karns 2000).

The UN Charter identifies four specific purposes of the organisation. First, to 'maintain international peace and security, and to that end to take effective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace'. Second, the UN was tasked to 'develop friendly relations among nations'. Third, to also 'achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character' including

'encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'. Fourth, and somewhat self-evidently, the UN was to be a 'centre for harmonising the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends' (UN 1945: Art. 1).

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Although early enthusiasm for the UN in Western countries has gradually cooled, especially since the 1970s, only in the US is there an articulate and influential *anti*-UN faction advocating US withdrawal (Pines 1984). What can advocates of global citizenship expect of the organisation? It was created nearly sixty years ago by two soon-to-be superpowers. The US had acquired global hegemonic power in an astoundingly rapid time, from its pre-1939 isolationism, and the United States' democratic instincts and institutions were very influential in drafting the Charter. Stalin's USSR had murdered over 30 million of its own citizens before falling victim to Hitler's aggression that killed a further 20 million in the course of the war. Great Britain still had an empire and, despite its domestic democracy, still claimed the right to rule, unelected, over one quarter of the earth's population. China was then a collapsed quasi-state, riven by civil war and without effective control of its own territory. The question is particularly cogent in that each of these founders also gave themselves, and later France, a permanent seat on the highest governing authority of the UN, the Security Council. They also gave themselves the right to veto its decisions (UN 1945: Art. 27) and further powers to veto any reform of these entrenched arrangements (UN 1945: Art. 108).

The Charter makes no reference to democracy; the Charter *does*, however, make references to '... promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all ...' (UN 1945: Art. 62). Elsewhere, the Charter identifies 'higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development' as specific goals, in words very reminiscent of the 'New Deal' economic policies pursued in the United States in the 1930s (UN 1945: Art. 55). The famous and redolent phrase from the Preamble, 'We the peoples of the United Nations', which introduces the Charter, implies a direct appeal to citizens. This is deceptive. This one use of 'we' is never repeated. At every turn thereafter, the Charter asserts the rights of Member States. This 'morality of states' – sitting in the UN and voting on the principle of one-member-one-vote – determines the efforts of the UN to implement the larger social and economic goals of the Charter. This morality of states is, however, a very partial basis on which to claim a *legitimate* basis for international policy and action. At best, the UN members' commitment to democratic causes has been selective. The South African, Namibian and Palestinian peoples have received recognition and succour in their struggles; whilst Tibetans, Biafrans and Sikhs have not. Their causes

would either attract the veto of one of the five permanent members or would offend a majority of Third World governments with mutually defensive reactions to claims for post-colonial secession by their own minorities.

The most fundamental purpose and function of the state is to provide security. Hobbesian political theory, which has dominated Western political thought since 1650, argues that citizens contract with one another to create good government, the primary purpose of which is to protect the citizen from domestic crime and from foreign invasion. If defeated in war, the state has failed in its contract to protect. If, in a civil war, the state turns upon its own citizens, it breaches Hobbes' contract. Can the UN provide the defenceless with security?

The founding purpose of the UN was, as we have seen, to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war' (UN 1945: Preamble). The UN was created to deter and to punish aggression by one state upon another and so provide collective security. From 1945 to 1990 the UN members' ability to do this was fundamentally compromised by the five veto-wielding powers. In the period 1946 to 1998 a total of 246 resolutions were vetoed in the Security Council, 120 by the USSR/Russian Federation, 72 by the USA, 32 by the UK, 18 by France and 4 by China (Mingst and Karns 2000: 28).

Only in those situations where the five veto powers could all agree was it possible to activate the UN's mechanisms to limit warfare. Those highly specialised conditions were only created on 15 occasions between 1945 and 1990. The creation of so-called peacekeeping forces was not envisaged in the Charter, where the term does not exist. Nonetheless, the ad-hoc creation and dispatch of lightly armed forces into cease-fire situations to undertake third-party verification of compliance, policing and sometimes humanitarian relief, created a very special niche for the UN.

Since 1990 the number of operations launched is more than double the previous number. In March 2001 fifteen UN peacekeeping operations were active. Thirty-nine operations have been terminated. One of the most controversial of the latter terminations did not involve any agreed *resolution* of the issue at hand, but rather the now very rare veto of a great power opposed to the continuing efforts at stabilisation. The UN's forward deployment of a preventive force in Macedonia, UNPREDEP, was terminated abruptly on 28 February 1999 when China vetoed a routine, six-monthly renewal of UNPREDEP's mandate (Williams 2000: 174). Almost exactly two years later, in March 2001, ethnic Albanian irregulars operating from Kosovo, a province in southern Serbia, were able to make incursions into Macedonian territory, thus creating a new front in the one former Yugoslav republic to have hitherto avoided hostilities.

In some of the most elaborate post-Cold War peacekeeping operations – Namibia, Cambodia and El Salvador – the UN has, in practical terms, acted as a quasi-government. In other cases the UN's mandate has become so over-extended, and the consent of the hosts and other parties so partial and

conditional, that serious and damaging failures have occurred. This was most notable in Bosnia and in Somalia. These attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of states have attempted to move that other bulwark of seventeenth-century political theory, the doctrine of sovereignty, enshrined in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.

This doctrine severely limits the right of states to intervene in the internal affairs of other states. This presumption in favour of non-intervention persisted throughout the twentieth century until, amongst other things, the Holocaust of 1941–5 persuaded even the most conservative states to recognise some fundamental notion of *human* rights which justified interference in *states'* rights.

For the Muslims in Serbian-occupied Bosnia in 1995, and for the Kurds of northern Iraq in 1991, the UN's actions to create so-called 'safe-havens' protected by UN forces led the UN into its most ambitious role as a guarantor of the physical security of millions of persons. It can be charged that these efforts have frequently been too little, too late, and also very selective.

The high point of intervention was the creation of a 'safe-haven' for the Iraqi Kurds in March 1991, policed and very effectively protected by NATO air forces. An element of double standards attached to these efforts. Whilst Iraqi Kurds received NATO air protection, their neighbouring kin in Turkey were bombarded by Turkish air strikes until 1999. As Orwell might have observed, all Kurds are equal but some are more equal than others. More remote genocidal civil wars received only token concern from the Security Council. The international community effectively abandoned the Rwandans to their fate in 1994 (Melvern 1995).

The nadir of this pretended competence to extend the 'safe-havens' policy was reached just five years after its inception. On 16 April 1993, six Bosnian cities were declared to be safe-havens – Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica – a decision contained in Security Council Resolution 819. Two years later, in July 1995, the refusal of senior UN commanders to authorise air strikes to repel Serbian advances on the besieged town of Srebrenica led to the surrender and taking-hostage of the resident Dutch peacekeeping force. The massacre of 7,079 Muslim men and boys that followed was the largest single act of mass murder in Europe since the last days of the Holocaust. The figure is that calculated by the Red Cross (Rohde 1997: 348). Srebrenica was the low-point of the 'new peacekeeping'. It is unlikely that the UN will be asked, or will again seek to adopt, the role of proclaiming and defending a protectorate within a civil war.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: DISASTERS, REFUGEES AND RIGHTS

Second to providing physical security, another source of UN legitimisation is in the provision of global technical assistance, aid and humanitarian relief. The work of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the children's

fund (UNICEF), and the High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) is probably the most widely known 'public' face of the UN. The former two agencies also receive direct charitable donations from volunteers and supporters. As with peacekeeping, this is global citizenship in action. In extreme cases of natural disaster, famine, flood and drought, the state can again be said to have failed its citizens. These natural disasters are sometimes compounded by the indifference and occasionally the deliberately harmful actions of government. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is a case in point. That said, some relief missions have actually institutionalised a 'refugee' situation. The quarter-million Arabs displaced in the first war with Israel in 1948, and their descendants, have lived in the most appalling poverty in UN-administered UNWRA camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria for three generations. They await a comprehensive political settlement that would include a Palestinian 'right of return' to match that which Israel extends to the Jewish diaspora.

Described by one commentator as 'notoriously venal' the UNHCR has for most of its history typified what is worst in UN practice (Righter 1995: 298). A Commission comprised of Member State governments, it has for decades refrained from all but the most predictable denunciations. Not until 1994 did the Commission adopt a resolution critical of any African country except South Africa, despite regimes such as those of Obote and Amin in Uganda, and the Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Empire, murdering their citizens by the hundreds of thousands in the 1970s. The Asian countries, from China to Singapore, have all benefited from mutual, respectful silence regarding each other's human rights records (Righter 1995: 299–300). The limitations and frustrations of this system drove UN Commissioner Mary Robinson to an announcement in March 2001 of her refusal to seek a second term in office.

SCIENCE, ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The specialised agencies are part of the so-called UN system but they are legally, financially and organisationally independent. This has generally helped to insulate them from the political disputes and Cold War tensions that characterised the UN itself. Some agencies pre-date the UN. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) were nineteenth-century creations. They were established to manage the first of many technical innovations of the industrial era which required a degree of international cooperation to function most efficiently. Later, technical agencies such as the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were created to regulate new, twentieth-century technologies. Human rights and welfare underlay the need to create the International Labour Organisation in 1919 and thereafter the World Health Organisation and the scientific, educational and cultural agency, UNESCO.

A common theme after the inter-war depression of the 1930s was to provide independent states with the means to jointly and simultaneously improve labour rights, social security and public education without the fear of losing economic advantage by acting alone. The desire to manage the post-war international economy in ways which would prevent the reversion to trade barriers, as had happened in the 1930s, lay behind the third variety of specialised agency. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (commonly known as the World Bank), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), now the World Trade Organisation, were created to stabilise the recovery of the world economy. Under their rules between 1944 and 1971 the Western and global economies enjoyed a quarter century of unparalleled growth. The dissolution of that system after 1971, the oil shocks of the 1970s and high rates of inflation were to lower averaged growth rates in the following quarter century. Only in the mid-1990s under entirely different conditions of deregulation, the massive growth of foreign direct investment, and genuine free trade in industrial goods, did the world economy recover the vitality of the heavily rule-bound and internationally cooperative quarter-century 1944–71.

Simultaneously with this task of managing economic stability, the so-called Bretton Woods organisations attempted to address the imperative for development to assist the poor two-thirds of the world's citizens in the so-called Third World. The UN undertook a leading role, intellectually and normatively, in promoting economic development in tandem with de-colonisation. The UN's own largest programme, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), sought to coordinate the developmental activities of all the specialised agencies who were themselves delivering aid, infrastructure and training in each of their functional 'sectors'. The UN's achievements in development have been frequently and heavily criticised. Not least among these are successive internal accounts by Jackson (1969) and Bertrand (1985), for example. They have pointed to duplication in agency efforts, exotic staffing excesses, the inappropriate targeting of Official Development Assistance (ODA), favouring of failed models of socialist planning and the creation of a corrupting dependency culture inimical to both local entrepreneurs and the attraction of private investment. These criticisms are not new.

REFORM AND DEMOCRATISATION OF THE UN?

Does the UN encourage global citizenship? Internationalism is not cosmopolitanism. The culture of *statism* is deeply rooted in the UN, and is consistent with its Charter, for example Articles 2.1 and 2.7. UN membership is for the newest, smallest and poorest states *constitutive*. The existence of a new country is confirmed by its membership of the UN. Sovereignty, which globalisers, Internet enthusiasts and others denigrate, is therefore central to status and participation within the UN system. The only non-sovereign actors

permitted to hold observer status at the General Assembly were those pretended sovereign organisations such as the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). During the 1970s and 1980s, they participated in the UN on the basis of their own *claim to sovereignty*, that is, the right to act as the 'sole legitimate representatives of the Namibian [or Palestinian] peoples'.

The reform of the UN is crucial to making the organisation more relevant and accountable to the people in whose name it was created. For successive US administrations and other conservatives, reform has been expressed mostly in managerial terms, that is, how to extract greater value for the tax-payer's dollar (Mingst and Karns 2000: 200–1). More ambitious theorists of cosmopolitan democracy wish to improve citizens' participation in the policy-forming and work of the UN and, by extension, other 'remote' organisations such as the World Bank. The European Union, for example, despite many criticisms, does have a directly elected parliament unlike any UN agency. The most literal way in which the reform of the United Nations could address the 'democratic deficit' in its institutions to become more representative of populations rather than governments would be to create a directly elected parliament or assembly. This 'Second Assembly' would operate alongside the existing General Assembly. A broad comparison would be the European Parliament and its role in relation to the European Council. Immediately the problems become apparent. A genuinely representative chamber of all the world's six billion population would be 20 per cent Chinese, 17 per cent Indian, 4 per cent US, and less than 1 per cent British in its distribution of seats. This contradicts the other democratic principle of one-Member State – one-vote. Second, why should the dictators, theocrats, generals and kleptomaniacs who govern many UN Member States show the slightest interest in permitting democratic participation for their citizens in the UN when they do not allow such freedoms at home? A similar case and a similar objection can be made to the call for binding global referenda (Commission on Global Governance 1995).

More feasible is the expansion of the already widespread role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or voluntary organisations within the UN system. The world's largest charities, humanitarian organisations, human rights groups, environmental campaigns and single-issue lobbyists are able to have observer status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a committee of the General Assembly. Household names such as Amnesty International, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Red Cross have enjoyed these rights for decades. In practice, this formal connection allows them a semi-permanent presence within the organisation where they represent their members' and subscribers' interests in constant research, lobbying and persuasion. It would be quite feasible to expand this presence into an 'NGO Assembly'. Meeting in September, in advance of the annual October opening of the UNGA, such an assembly could focus attention on the forthcoming

agenda of the Assembly. By its combination of expert opinion and open debate it could highlight and, frankly, embarrass the grossly over-hyped October sessions of Assembly, which are traditionally addressed by heads of Government. These stage-managed 'debates' currently occupy several months of the UN calendar before the real work can begin, near to Christmas, in the committees of the UNGA, where negotiations are conducted amongst permanent, professional diplomatic staff.

The greatest single obstacle to the UN undertaking more independent initiatives is its complete lack of financial independence. The UN relies entirely upon the Member States' subscriptions, known as 'assessed contributions', and increasingly upon their voluntary contributions to specific programmes such as UNICEF. This makes each welfare, environment and development programme especially vulnerable to annual fluctuations and to political pressure.

Logically, an international organisation could raise additional revenues by taxing those activities in the global economy which transcend state boundaries and which therefore fall outside the revenue-collecting scope of states. Taxing the use of the global commons – such as outer space, the ozone layer, the climate system and the high seas – which all states *use* but do not *own*, would have additional gains in environmental protection. The global commons are largely 'free', resulting in over-exploitation, especially by environmental pollution. 'Taxing the commons' would therefore serve three related purposes. It would create a legal responsibility on the international community to protect and conserve these territories. Second, raising a charge for the use of the commons would deter their pollution and over-use. Third, revenues could be dedicated to UN services, most obviously the work of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), UNDP, UNICEF and UNHCR. Suitable candidates would be levies on geo-stationary orbits used by telecommunications and satellite TV broadcasting companies, and on high-seas fishing conducted beyond sovereign waters. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Seas already provides for UN taxation of deep-sea mining revenues from the 'common heritage of mankind' zones beyond the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones allowed to coastal states. Marine pollution – for example, oil-tanker accidents – could be fined. The Framework Convention on Climate Change, adopted at Rio in 1992 and modified by the Kyoto Protocol, allows countries to trade unused national allowances for carbon-dioxide emissions. This market could be taxed for WMO or for UNEP to fund continuing climate research, and to assist developing countries with the costs of climate change. Other possible sources of international taxation are the Tobin tax suggested as a levy on international currency dealings, on aviation fuel, defence spending in national budgets and the international arms trade (Grubb et al. 2000; ODI 1996).

The US Senate has set itself against any international tax-raising powers for the UN. As part of its general hostility towards the Third World majority

driven programmes of the UN, the US Senate is determined to prevent the UN from acquiring autonomous sources of funding. The damage being inflicted upon the UN by reliance on traditional funding is shown by its state of arrears. The US has applied what can only be called financial sanctions against the UN over a period of nearly twenty years since the early 1980s. Other major debtors currently include Brazil, Yugoslavia, Argentina and Iraq. The US made the first of its scheduled arrears payments in 1999. It would have lost its General Assembly vote had the arrears total exceeded two years' assessed contributions (UN 1945: Art. 19). As of 31 May 2000 the US owed \$1,774.7 million, or 61 per cent of the total \$2,914.3 million owed to the UN on that date. Two-thirds of these arrears constituted unpaid peacekeeping assessments (UNA-USA 2000: 275).

CONCLUSION

The current state of the UN, after a decade of post-Cold War opportunities for reform and expansion, suggests that the recognition of global citizenship has not penetrated far into this most unchanging of international organisations. Relative to the enlargement and deepening of the European Union, the formation of NAFTA and the controversial expansion of the WTO's mandate in world trade, the UN has been entirely unreformed in its Charter and structure.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has advanced internal administrative reforms, called 'Track One', almost all concerned with meeting the insatiable demands of the US for staff reductions and managerial tinkering. Structural reform, 'Track Two', is enmired. Not even the expansion of the Security Council to more representatively reflect the changed power structure of the past half-century can be agreed. Britain and France defend their permanent seats. Germany and Japan aspire to join them. Half a dozen Third World members, such as Egypt, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Brazil and Argentina cannot agree a regional formula for enlargement. The US anyway opposes enlargement. Development programmes are frozen, matching the stagnation and latter decline of bilateral aid programmes. The decline of ODA within the twenty-four democracies of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the aid agency of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, is a telling case study of declining commitment to internationalism during a decade of post-Cold War optimism concerning enlarged commitments to sustainable development. Only five countries – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands and France – actually give above the 0.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) target adopted by the UN in 1970. In 1995 the USA gave just 0.10 per cent of GDP as ODA. The most generous of the DAC twenty-two was Norway at 0.87 per cent (DAC 1996: A22). The declining status of ODA is vividly stated thus: 'The ratio of ODA to Gross National Product, a measure of donor countries' performance effort, has fallen to just

0.27 per cent, the lowest level since the United Nations adopted the 0.7 per cent target in 1970' (DAC 1996: 66).

The decline of ODA illustrates an issue of global citizenship, in which the majority of the world's richest and most clearly democratic governments have under performed in their duties for a quarter of a century. It is an issue entirely within the domestic, sovereign grasp of each government to act to tackle. How much more difficult, therefore, is the task of modernising and energising UN mechanisms?

The UN is firmly rooted in the intergovernmental tradition and even its democratic member governments will resist the extension of direct or participatory models of democracy to these institutions. Manifestly, the non-democratic member governments will resist any attempt to enlarge the ability of the UN to inspect, challenge and hold accountable their human rights abuses and other practices. The 1990s saw extraordinary progress in extending democratic government in Eastern and Central Europe, in Latin America, selectively in East Asia and more partially still in Africa. Only when democratic government is established across the globe will the more exotic dimensions of global citizenship be addressed. Until then the UN will perform with very variable efficiency. Underfunded, and subject to political interference in its humanitarian role, the UN's ability to help the world's poorest and most vulnerable, the one billion of the global underclass, will suffer most by this neglect. The only political choice for global citizens is to maintain the case for reform.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does the UN still reflect the times in which it was created?
2. How can the UN provide for the security of victims of aggression?
3. Global citizens should be concerned with the financial crisis of the UN and its impact on the UN's ability to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. How might this be alleviated?
4. How might the UN be made more accountable to popular democratic opinions?

