DEMOCRATIC GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: ISSUES, RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES

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Summary

The paradigms of sustainable development as they have been formulated and tested by all branches of science constitute EOLSS, a comprehensive guide to the achievement of global security. But in the final analysis, international well-being depends on the strength of global governance – the collective decisions of international government organizations – to resolve the grave crises threatening all of our life support systems. The dangers of international armed conflict now share top priority on the UN agenda with disease, climate change, and a host of other critical problems. All countries are in jeopardy. The multiagency UN system and other international government agencies and programs testify to the well-founded concern for the world's future in countries in all regions, at every level of economic development. Successful activities prove that democratic global governance can work with the support of national governments and a free and viable nongovernmental sector. At the same time, there has been widespread failure to provide funding and support for the political decisions and social changes required if international policies are to be effective. The reasons for and impact of such failure are examined in this EOLSS theme. Its articles suggest possible ways to achieve the multiple changes in national and international policies basic to the future of the planet.

1. An Introduction To The Theme

This theme relates the critical international issues of the post-war era to the major decisions of the UN and its IGO network. It divides into two topics: the first concerns global governance and the collective decision processes of the UN system, while the second reviews and analyzes the impact of the nongovernmental sector as it has grown in strength and become part of a nascent global civil society.

1.1. Considering the structure of IGOs

The authors of the articles that follow were asked to consider the global need which had initiated the creation of an IGO or an IGO program. It was suggested that IGOs were similar in many respects to national governments. If the latter are rooted in democracy they have a constitution that sets forth guiding principles for governance, and they have institutions to implement and protect those principles. When a public need requires a decision by some level of government, its leaders may invoke a task force or commission to set new policy goals or reinforce the old. As legislatures and executives process requests for action they may be influenced by a number of factors. The dynamics of economic development and the influence of cultural and social institutions inevitably complicate decision processes. Increasingly, democratic government decisions have been influenced by active components of a civil society that represents constituents who may lack a direct voice in governance. The nongovernmental sector also includes the media and political party units, which are free to suggest decisions and to press for their acceptance by the government.

Thus it is the thrust of this theme that one can evaluate the success of governments, national and international, by the degree to which they resolve the difficult issues for which they are held responsible. Articles in this theme have been written by specialists

in their respective fields and include academicians as well as activists. The theme covers issues of crucial global significance: peacekeeping, the environment, human rights advancement, global health, and the question of reforming the UN to improve its decision-making processes. The articles discuss the creation of agencies and programs as they have emerged from international negotiations and conventions. The guiding principles embodied in such documents as the UN Charter might be thought of as parts of an international constitution. These principles help to formulate IGO structures and the specifics of member state responsibilities in the UN system. Each of the IGOs under discussion (all of them part of or relevant to the UN system) has the attention of an increasingly strong nongovernmental sector, representing constituencies that have no direct voice in IGO decisions. An active, democratic civil society is as important to such decisions as it is for democratic national governments.

1.2. The gravity of issues

A *New York Times* editorial on January 29 2001 pointed out that environmental damage, water shortages, mass movement of refugees, overpopulation, infectious diseases, and Third-World poverty may have become greater threats to international security than regional wars and intra-national armed conflict. The cost of reversing the damage of natural and social and economic disasters is estimated to be very great, and steadily increasing. As the *Times* points out, US$1 billion was spent in the early 1990s alone to eradicate 1,000 cases of resistant tuberculosis in New York City. As a result of the much greater costs of controlling the AIDS pandemic, a significant number of countries face political and economic collapse, and others years of economic and social instability.

Global governance faces very large-scale problems. In the process of attempting their resolution, member states have repeatedly reached consensus on conventions and the need to implement them through international government agencies and programs. And yet problems continue to outpace these actions. The severity and complexity of issues is only in part responsible. The failure of member states to give institutional and financial support to their solution is the prime factor in failure.

The two topic-level articles identify threads that run through the histories of IGO and INGO systems. Analyses of the IGO response to major global issues in most circumstances emphasize the same types of variables. IGO member states collectively identify the international dimensions of problems and emphasize the need for international solutions. There is a struggle to reach consensus on goals and then to match the goals with specific objectives. Where there is no operating agency, then one is established. In the history of the UN, agreements have been reached by most or all of its member states. In recent decades participation by the nongovernmental sector is frequently encouraged and facilitated. It is worth pointing out that within both the governmental and nongovernmental sectors organizations may be competing or in disagreement.

The power to enforce policy decisions by IGOs old and new is limited by member governments' perceived need to protect sovereignty and by strong resistance to the political, cultural, and social changes often required by the decisions. Overall, failure to implement agency goals is more common than success. The articles in each topic

provide in-depth analyses of this phenomenon, seeking to explain failure as crises mount and an increasingly feisty NGO sector uses a battery of techniques, some old and some new, in order to become an intrinsic part of the international public policy process A final section suggests how global governance may be improved with the development of a free and increasingly democratic nongovernmental sector, and with the recognition by an increasing number of developed and developing, democratic and transition countries of the greater leadership that is needed and the significant role each can play in an effective global governance.

2. The Development Of Global Governance

2.1. IGOs

Global governance is carried out by a number of agencies, most within the UN but some without. Most are intended to be global in scope but many are regional in goals and membership. As early as the nineteenth century it was recognized in Europe and the Americas that agreements alone could not achieve the intent of their signatories. International agencies or commissions were established with delegated authority to carry out the joint decisions of their member governments. The organizations thus established have a set of specific goals, and detailed requirements for their implementation. It follows that the continued support of each member government is needed if agency decisions are to be carried out and issues resolved for the long term.

The IGOs which have the direct power to enforce decisions on possibly unwilling governments are few in number. UN commissions and programs essentially set standards for voluntary compliance. Obvious failures to comply with some agreements may be the occasion for on site monitoring. With respect to human rights, for example, the Human Rights Commission assigns rapporteurs or some other kind of overview so that reports may be developed and improved government policies recommended. The UN system has been strengthened in some ways, particularly through the willingness of countries to grant decision-making authority to the ministerial level, as Alger's topic-level article, "International issues and IGO goals in the post Second World War period" points out.

As government representatives negotiated the UN Charter, they set a course not only for achieving the peaceful settlement of disputes but also for the allocation of resources to other agencies and programs to aid refugees, reduce poverty and end hunger, improve economic co-operation, preserve human rights, and serve humanity in other ways. The Charter has opened the door to UN response during the post-war period to multiple issue areas, including those involving wars and genocide, inequality in economic development, and opposition to authoritarian rule.

The overview article for this topic concentrates its attention on the way the UN has responded to peacekeeping needs as well as to social, economic, and political problems. The growing interdependence of issues is important. The life support systems that depend on ecological balance, for example, are influenced by the careful use of these resources and thus we have come to refer to "sustainable development" as a basic issue area. Alger's article explains the structure of the UN as it has developed in recent years,

and the way in which it has dealt with major issues including the prevention and resolution of armed conflict. The latter is the subject of special scrutiny in Smith's, "The need for effective peacekeeping."

The articles in this topic are concerned as well with the rationale and resources of UN programs in the other major issues. Environmental issues are dealt with in French, "The role of the United Nations in environmental protection and sustainable development" and Switzer, "The preservation of nature and natural resources: the uncertain future." The World Health Organization and other agencies and programs grapple with the catastrophic impact of pandemics of infectious disease (Murphy, "A global approach to disease: co-ordinating through the World Health Organization"). The need for adherence to international standards for justice and the protection of human rights in developed as well as developing countries is covered by Forsythe and Mehrtens, "The UN and human rights on the eve of the twenty-first century" and Murphy, "The UN impact on gender issues." Sutterlin has addressed the question of changes that have been suggested for improving UN structure and output in "UN reform: on-track for the twenty-first century?"

2.2. INGOs

INGOs and their national NGO allies are increasingly active critics of UN and other IGO programs. If the latter are to function democratically there needs to be a free and independent international civil society, ensuring public participation in national and international policy making. The overview article (Murphy, "The goals and strategies of international nongovernmental organizations") evaluates the general impact of the nascent civil society on IGO programs, suggesting how INGOs might mobilize constituencies to support a more democratic and effective international governance structure. Globalization of issues has stimulated the formation of thousands of INGOs in recent decades. They have drawn worldwide attention to all of the major issue areas, taking part in international conferences, and lobbying agencies and national governments to comply with the agreements that have resulted from them.

The topic article emphasizes the complexity of civil society in the formation of national and international policies. All national and international policy decisions have both supporters and opponents in every issue area. Active lobbying for both sides takes place at all steps in the decision process, from the initial evaluation of the need for a decision to the creation of an agency to help to fill the need. Because international commitments more often than not are supported by consensus, there may be a tendency for analysts and activists alike to monitor the continued presence of INGOs that give full support to the rationale of a new UN commission or program and to neglect those groups that remain in opposition.

The level of tolerance for truly independent NGOs and media varies. Many countries are labeled "emerging democracies," for example, when they are clearly at the edge rather than at the beginning of a true transition from an authoritarian to a democratic form of government. Those in transition to democracy are ordinarily involved at the same time in moving from a controlled to a market economy. For most developing countries, the process is slow, as the continued GDP levels and other markers indicate.

As a result, the movement toward a multi-party system with free elections and other criteria of democracy may not only be slow but subject to setbacks.

Subsequent articles in the topic emphasize the critical need for improved co-ordination among groups if the UN system and IGOs on the regional level are to carry out their mandates. To contribute positively toward this purpose, INGOs and NGOs must establish credibility, taking care that they are organized democratically and managed well (Nelson, "Developing an effective role for INGOs in global governance"). Countries in transition to democracy can benefit from aid from Western democracies, as Klose describes in "Contributing to an international civil society: a Eurasian example." Reasons for the success of an NGO–WHO collaboration adoption of an international disease alert system are explored in Preslar, "Combating infectious disease as a global security goal: emerging trends and strange bedfellows."

A discussion of the status of human rights in three countries – Egypt, Guatemala, and the United States – focuses on the difficulties of overcoming political and cultural antagonisms toward the implementation of UN Declaration of Human Rights goals (Murphy, "Human rights: the struggle for international justice"). Elliott, in "Gender equality: a women in development case study," illustrates the way in which the perspectives of women in developed and developing countries were widened and shared particularly within the last decade.

3. IGOs: structure, programs, major issues

3.1. An introduction to the UN and its remarkable evolution

The roots of the UN system may be traced to the early nineteenth-century quest for international stability in Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars (Alger, "International issues and IGO goals in the post Second World War period"). At the end of the century, the Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907 sought, for the first time, permanent and universal participation by governments in the peaceful settlement of disputes. After the First World War, the leaders of the League of Nations followed similar goals and borrowed the practices of regional and international commissions by creating an IGO which would provide representation for state governments and support a continuous decision process.

Alger traces the dynamic development of the UN system with a detailed analysis of tools it has made available for peace building, which have in turn contributed to an expanding definition of such fundamental global values as peace, human rights, development, and ecological balance. The decision processes of the UN have made multilateral decision-making commonplace for a growing array of organizations and reduced barriers between the people and the system. The UN system, however, has been crippled by the failure of its member states to provide adequate financing for it.

3.1.1. *The quest for peace and security*

Alger seeks to illuminate a broad array of peace tools and to identify trends in their use. Tools that have emerged from UN practice are varied and are relevant to developing

economic needs. The recognition that functional co-operation is difficult when there are a few wealthy states and many poor led to international funding for economic development in deprived regions. From this type of program emerged demand for a new international economic order (NIEO). International programs then reflected the impact of new technologies on global relations and institutions and the eventual demand for a new international information and communications order. New technologies sought to support ecological balance and governance for the commons (oceans, outer space, and Antarctica) as a way of countering the deep penetration of human activity into them.

The more recent emergence of what Alger calls humanitarian intervention offers an example of the way in which the emergence of new peace tools gradually led to a reinterpretation of the UN Charter. Thus, while the latter protects the sovereignty of member states in essentially domestic matters, emerging human rights standards were used to justify intervention in places such as Kosovo and Somalia. At the same time, the recent emergence of preventive diplomacy reveals a demand from many quarters for measures that take a long-term perspective. The fifth trend reflects the growing involvement of actors other than states in the pursuit of peace, identified in different contexts as nongovernmental organizations, people's movements, and social movements. Presently, all are included in what is now referred to as "the global civil society."

Courtney Smith ("The need for effective peacekeeping") provides extensive details of peacekeeping from 1948 to 2001. During this time the UN has deployed fifty-four peacekeeping missions covering every continent. He estimates the cost at US$21 billion. The missions have resulted in the deaths of 1,672 military and civilian personnel. His history of peacekeeping during this period makes the case that the savings in lives has far outweighed the cost of the operations. He tracks traditional peacekeeping, which was effective at halting fighting but less so in promoting environments for conflict resolution. The end of the cold war and subsequent outbreaks of violence brought about peace enforcement that was based on new principles such as the willingness of the UN to intervene in a country without the consent of the government. During the 1990s there was some retrenchment in the use of the new peacekeeping tools as the major powers withdrew support for them. The report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (the "Brahimi Report," named after Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria who chaired the panel) made far-reaching recommendations for changes in current peacekeeping policies.

3.1.2. *Decision processes*

The commissioning of IGOs within and outside the UN system has followed familiar patterns. International meetings are called by supporting or interested state leaders to deal with a critical problem that individual governments cannot resolve. Consensus on goals is reached, the structure of a new or expanded agency scoped, encouraged by pressures from participating INGOs.

The formal establishment of a new agency or program follows. Member-government leaders are constantly alert to possible conflicts between the commitments made to international agreements and their own political, economic, and cultural concerns.

Despite this constraint, they nevertheless have endorsed the transfer of a great deal of everyday decision-making to the permanent missions of states located at UN headquarters in New York City.

Thus, despite continuing disagreements among governments about programs, new procedures and permanent institutions are in place for the exchange of views, debate, and agreement by consensus on a number of questions. This type of resolution works not only with non-controversial issues but may bring consensus out of deeply divided points of view.

Reaching global governance goals has been crippled by serious financial problems. Funding for programs is often at a token level. Their continuity and strength therefore may depend on budgeting by governments that are reluctant or unable to allocate resources to them. A further problem is that countries have failed to pay their dues. The US has been responsible for two-thirds of the total delinquency, an estimated US$1.8 billion (see Table 1 and the website, www.un.org/News/fact).

	Regular Budgets	Voluntary Contributions (Member assessment)	Total
UN	1,171,592,550	203,616,000	1,373,208,550
Sub-units			
UNICEF		913,448,000	913,448,000
UNDP		893,543,000	893,543,000
UNFPA		256,235,000	256,235,000
UNRWA		308,281,000	308,281,000
UNHCR		924,282,000	924,282,000
WFP		1,193,108,000	1,193,108,000
Total	1,171,592,550	4,692,513,000	5,862,105,550
Specialized Agencies			
ILO	289,750,000	101,719,000	391,469,000
FAO	325,000,000	240,579,000	565,579,000
UNESCO	259,222,500	130,498,000	389,720,000
ICAO	50,340,000	29,265,000	79,605,000
WHO	421,327,000	341,265,000	762,592,000
UPU	30,211,638	4,780,000	34,991,638
ITU	142,740.090	27,035,000	169,775,090
WMO	53,620,690	29,274,000	82,894,690
IMO	31,123,957	4,815,000	35,938,957
WIPO	107,775,000	109,000	107,884,000
UNIDO	97,256,140	70,971,000	168,227,140
IAEA	221,992,000	91,356,000	313,348,000
Total	2,030,359,015	1,071,666,000	3,102,024,515
Total	**3,201,951,565**	**5,764,179,000**	**8,964,130.065**

(Table developed from UN General Assembly document A/53/647, 6 November 1998, and A/53/647/Corr.1, 19 May 2000)

Table 1. From Table 7: UN System Budgets, 1997 (In U S Dollars) in Alger
(International Issues and IGO Goals in the Post World-War II Period)

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Biographical Sketch

Dr Irene Lyons Murphy is an author and policy analyst who specializes in national and international policy issues, emphasizing the relationship of the scientific management of health and environmental issues to government policies. She has most recently been a faculty affiliate at Colorado State University and was previously an adjunct professor at George Washington University. She was for several years a senior adviser on water resource and environmental issues in the office of the secretary of the US Department of the Interior. She has most recently participated in workshops on the use of electronic networks for the protection of international resources in Lisbon and Amman, and at a meeting of the Balkan countries in Thessaloniki, Greece. She is the author of *The Danube: a River Basin in Transition* (Kluwer, 1997), the editor of *Protecting Danube Resources: Ensuring Access to Environmental Data and Information* (Kluwer, 1997), and *Transboundary Water Resources in the Balkans* (Kluwer, 2000), and has published a number of articles and monographs on international issues. She has Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Political Science from Columbia University and is a graduate of Barnard College. She presently works as an independent consultant in Washington, D.C.