

Andrew Heywood, Chp. 18



**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
AND
THE UNITED NATIONS**

What are International Organisations?



- Institutions with formal procedures and a membership comprising three or more states.
- They can be thought of as instruments through which states pursue their own interests; arenas that facilitate debate; actors that can affect global outcomes.
- Bases for categorization depend on membership, competence, function and decision-making authority.
- The significance of the phenomenon of international organization is hotly disputed. Some argue it is a mechanism for traditional power politics; others claim they contain the seeds of supranational government.

Rise of International Organizations



- International organizations differ according to:
- Membership- whether they have a restricted or universal membership.
- Competence- whether their responsibilities are issue-specific or comprehensive.

APPROACHES TO... INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS



- **REALIST:** Deeply sceptical about international organizations, viewing them as largely ineffective bodies
- **LIBERAL:** Committed supporters of international organizations: international organization reflects the extent of interdependence in the global system
- **CRITICAL:** Social constructivists believe that levels of cooperation depend on how states construe their own identities and interests, as well those of other states

The UN



- Type: Intergovernmental Organisation
- Established: 1945
- Location: New York
- Membership: 193 countries

The UN



- The United Nations was established as the successor to the League of Nations when 50 states met in San Francisco to agree the terms of the UN Charter.

Major organs of the UN :

- The General Assembly.
- The Security Council.
- The Secretariat.
- The Economic and Social Council.



- The UN family also includes a range of specialized agencies, funds and programmes, including the IMF, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The UN



- The principal aim of the UN is to maintain international peace and security, with responsibility for this being vested in the Security Council.
- However, the UN has been restricted in carrying out this role particularly by the veto powers of the P-5 (of the Security Council) and the lack of an independent military capacity.
- The UN's mixed performance in the area of peacekeeping has led to an increasing emphasis instead on the process of peace-building.

The UN



- The UN's economic and social responsibilities are discharged by a sprawling and, seemingly, ever-enlarging array of programmes, funds and specialized agencies.
- Its main areas are human rights, development and poverty reduction, and the environment.
- Such widening concerns have ensured strong support for the UN, particularly across the developing world.

Future of the UN: challenges and reform



- Why has there been pressure to reform the UN Security Council?
- Why has such reform been so difficult to bring about?
- The UN faces a range of important challenges and pressures for reform.
- These include those generated by the changing location of global power in an increasingly multipolar world, those associated with criticisms of the composition and powers of the Security Council, and those related to the UN's finances and organization.



- Permanent membership and the power to veto Council decisions means that the UN is dominated, as far as the core issue of peace and security is concerned, by great power politics: Some UN members are clearly more equal than others.
- The requirement of unanimity amongst P-5 states has also effectively neutered the UN as the basis for collective security, apart from exceptional circumstances (Korea and the Gulf War).



- Moreover, the membership of P-5 is widely seen to be outdated, reflecting the great powers of the immediate post-1945 period, not even the superpower politics of the Cold War period.
- If the Council is to have permanent members, few would challenge the right of the USA, China or Russia (at least in terms of its nuclear capability) to be among them, but France and the UK have long ceased to be states of first-ranking status.



- The existing membership reflects a regional imbalance, with no representation for Africa or for Latin America among its permanent members.
- The case for a revised membership is that a more representative and up-to-date Council would enjoy wider support and influence, helping to make the UN a more effective peacemaker and peacekeeper.



- During the Cold War, the UN was routinely paralyzed by superpower rivalry that led to deadlock in the Security Council, a consequence of the veto powers of its permanent members.
- A further difficulty was that the UN was never able to develop an armed force of its own, so that it has always had to rely on troops supplied by individual member states.
- Its impact on matters of peace and security was therefore strictly limited.



- The end of the Cold War, however, produced optimism about the capacity of an activist UN to preside over a ‘new world order’.
- The UN approved the US-led expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War of 1991, and, in a few short years, the number of UN peacekeeping operations had doubled, and the annual budget for peacekeeping had quadrupled.



- Hopes for a more effective UN in the post-Cold War period were, however, dashed, largely by a declining willingness of states, freed from East–West tensions, to accept neutral, multilateral intervention, and by the eroding support, both financial and military, of the USA.
- The capacity of the UN to enforce a system of collective security is severely limited by the fact that it is essentially a creature of its members



- Its role has been confined essentially to providing mechanisms that facilitate the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.
- Despite some genuine successes in peacekeeping (such as in Mozambique and El Salvador) and in peace-building (East Timor), the UN's reputation was badly damaged by its failure to prevent large-scale slaughter in Rwanda and Bosnia in the mid-1990s.



- The UN nevertheless continues to exert significant ‘soft’ power, particularly in the developing world, where it is viewed as the leading institution providing support for economic and social development.



- However, the UN has been subject to a variety of criticisms.
- Most damningly, the UN has been portrayed as entirely non-legitimate, a proto-world government that has no democratic credentials and which, over time, has come to pay less respect to national sovereignty.
- Others claim that it is little more than a debating society, due to the fact that it can do no more than its member states, and particularly the P-5, allow it to do.
- Further criticisms focus on the convoluted and deeply bureaucratic nature of the organization itself, and its tendency towards inefficiency and mismanagement, exposed not least by the 2003 Oil-for-Food scandal.

Debating...

Is the UN obsolete and unnecessary?



FOR

- *A proto-world government*
- *Irrelevant debating society*
- *Lack of moral compass*
- *Outdated and unreformable*

Debating...

Is the UN obsolete and unnecessary?



AGAINST

- *An indispensable body*
- *Peacekeeping successes*
- *New agendas and new thinking*
- *Mend it, don't end it*