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The United Nations in World Politics

It is hard to imagine a world without the United Nations. Despite many ups and downs over more than sixty-five years, the UN has not only endured but also played a key role in reshaping the world as we know it. It has embodied humankind's hopes for a better world through the prevention of conflict. It has promoted a culture of legality and rule of law. It has raised an awareness of the plight of the world's poor, and it has boosted development by providing **technical assistance**. It has promoted concern for human rights, including the status of women, the rights of the child, and the unique needs of indigenous peoples. It has formulated the concept of environmentally sustainable development. It has contributed immensely to making multilateral diplomacy the primary way in which international norms, public policies, and law are established. It has served as a catalyst for global policy networks and partnerships with other actors. It plays a central role in **global governance**. Along the way, the UN has earned several Nobel Peace Prizes, including the 2005 award to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its chief, Mohamed ElBaradei; the 2001 prize to the UN and Secretary-General Kofi Annan; the 1988 award to UN peacekeepers; and the 1969 honor to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the many areas of UN activity, we can point to the UN's accomplishments and also to its shortcomings and failures. More than sixty-five years after its creation, the UN continues to be the only **international organization (IO)** or, more correctly, **international intergovernmental organization (IGO)** of global scope and nearly universal membership that has an agenda encompassing the broadest range of governance issues. It is a complex system that serves as the central site for multilateral diplomacy, with the UN's General Assembly as center stage. Three weeks of general debate at the opening of each fall assembly session draw foreign ministers and heads of state from small and large states to take advantage of the opportunity to address the nations of the world and to engage in intensive diplomacy.

As an intergovernmental organization, however, the UN is the creation of its member states; it is they who decide what it is that they will allow this organization to do and what resources—financial and otherwise—they will provide. In this regard, the UN is very much a political organization, subject to the winds of world politics and the whims of member governments. To understand the UN today, it is useful to look back at some of the major changes in world politics and how they affected the UN.

THE UNITED NATIONS IN WORLD POLITICS: VISION AND REALITY

The establishment of the United Nations in the closing days of World War II was an affirmation of the desire of war-weary nations for an organization that could help them avoid future conflicts and promote international economic and social cooperation. As we discuss further in Chapter 2, the UN's Charter built on lessons learned from the failed League of Nations created at the end of World War I and earlier experiments with international unions, conference diplomacy, and dispute-settlement mechanisms. It represented an expression of hope for the possibilities of a new global security arrangement and for fostering the social and economic conditions necessary for peace to prevail.

The United Nations and Politics in the Cold War World

The World War II coalition of great powers (the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China), whose unity had been key to the UN's founding, was nevertheless a victim of rising tensions almost before the first General Assembly session in 1946. Developments in Europe and Asia between 1946 and 1950 soon made it clear that the emerging Cold War would have fundamental effects on the UN. How could a **collective security** system operate when there was no unity among the great powers on whose cooperation it depended? Even the admission of new members was affected between 1950 and 1955 because each side vetoed applications from states that were allied with the other.

The Cold War made Security Council actions on threats to peace and security extremely problematic, with repeated sharp exchanges and frequent deadlock. Some conflicts, such as the French and American wars in Vietnam and the Soviet interventions in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, were never brought to the UN at all. The UN was able to respond to the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 only because the Soviet Union was boycotting the Security Council at the time.

In order to deal with a number of regional conflicts, the UN developed something never mentioned in its charter, namely, **peacekeeping**; this has involved the prevention, containment, and moderation of hostilities between or within

states through the use of lightly armed multinational forces of soldiers, police, and civilians.

Peacekeeping was a creative response to the breakdown of great-power unity and the spread of East-West tensions to regional conflicts. UN peacekeeping forces were used extensively in the Middle East and in conflicts arising out of the decolonization process during the Cold War period. Thirteen operations were deployed from 1948 to 1988. The innovation of peacekeeping illustrates what the Cold War did to the UN: "It had repealed the proposition that the organization should undertake to promote order by bringing the great powers into troubled situations. . . . Henceforward, the task of the United Nations was to be defined as that of keeping the great powers out of such situations."[1]

The Effects of the Nuclear Revolution. The UN Charter had just been signed when the use of two atomic bombs on Japan on August 6 and 10, 1945, began a scientific and technological revolution in warfare that would have a far-reaching impact on the post–World War II world. At the United Nations, the earliest and most obvious effect of nuclear weapons was to restore the issue of disarmament (and its relative, arms control) to the agenda. Disarmament as an approach to peace had been discredited during the interwar era. The UN almost from its inception in early 1946 became a forum for discussions and negotiations on **arms control and disarmament**. Hence, the nuclear threat not only transformed world politics but also made the UN the key place where statespersons sought to persuade each other that war had become excessively dangerous, that disarmament and arms control were imperative, and that they were devoted to peace and restraint.

The Role of the United Nations in Decolonization and the Emergence of New States. At the close of World War II, few would have predicted the end of colonial rule in Africa and Asia. Yet twenty-five years after the UN Charter was signed, most of the former colonies had achieved independence with relatively little threat to international peace and security. Membership in the UN more than doubled from 51 states in 1945 to 118 in 1965 and had tripled by 1980 (see Figure 1.1), the vast majority of these new members being newly independent states. The UN played a significant role in this remarkably peaceful transformation, much of which took place during the height of the Cold War. Twenty-six new states were later seated in the UN after the Cold War's end, mostly as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

The UN Charter endorsed the principle of **self-determination**. Already independent former colonies, such as India, Egypt, Indonesia, and the Latin American states, used the UN as a forum to advocate an end to colonialism and independence for territories ruled by Great Britain, France, the Netherlands,

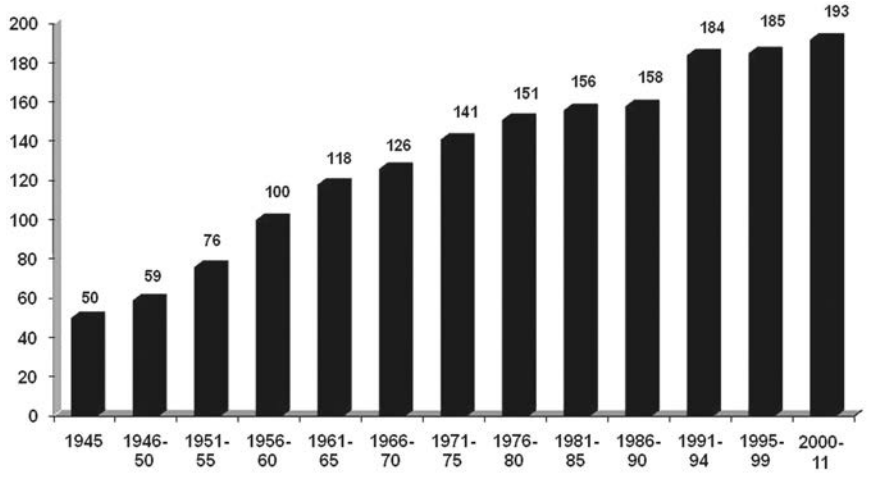

FIGURE 1.1. Growth in UN Membership, 1945–2011

SOURCE: Compiled from Robert E. Riggs and Jack C. Plano, *The United Nations: International Organization of World Politics*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994), 45, and updated.

Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. Success added new votes to the growing anticolonial coalition.

By 1960 a majority of the UN's members favored decolonization. General Assembly Resolution 1514 that year condemned the continuation of colonial rule and preconditions for granting independence (such as a lack of preparation for self-rule) and called for annual reports on the progress toward independence for all remaining colonial territories. The UN provided an important forum for the **collective legitimation** of a change in international norms (that is, colonialism and imperialism were no longer acceptable patterns of state behavior, and colonial peoples had a right to self-determination). The international system was fully internationalized to include all sovereign, independent states that sought membership.

The consequences of decolonization and the expanded number of independent states were manifold. The less developed, often newly independent states of Africa, Asia, and Latin America formed a strong coalition within the UN known as the **Group of 77 (G-77)**; after 1960 this coalition commanded a majority of votes on a broad range of issues. Whereas the Cold War had shaped politics in the UN until 1960, the G-77, and what became known as "North-South issues," shaped much of the politics thereafter. The two sets of issues be-

came entwined in complex ways, and political divisions changed. The Soviet Union and many Western European states often sided with the G-77, and the United States frequently found itself in a small minority.

Beginning in the 1960s, new issues proliferated on the UN's agenda, many at the urging of the G-77. For example, in 1967, Arvid Pardo, the representative from Malta, argued on behalf of newly independent states that the resources found on the deep seabed were the "common heritage of mankind," not the property of any specific nation. This would subsequently have an impact on emerging environmental issues as well as on the law of the sea. Of all the issues pushed by the G-77, however, none received more attention than the drive for economic and social development.

The North-South Conflict. By the late 1960s, UN agendas were dominated by issues of economic and social development and the relations between the developed countries of the industrial North and the less developed countries (LDCs) of the South. The ideological leaning of the G-77 in the 1960s and 1970s toward a heavy government role in economic development and redistribution of wealth shaped many UN programs and activities. In the 1970s the G-77 pushed for a **New International Economic Order (NIEO)**, marshaling support in the UN General Assembly for "A Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order" and "A Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States." For most of the decade, the NIEO debates dominated and polarized the UN system, with the deep divide between North and South at times making agreement on both economic and security issues impossible to achieve.

The North-South conflict continues to be a central feature of world politics, and hence of the UN, although the rhetoric and issues of the NIEO sharply diminished in the late 1980s and 1990s. For example, the UN's treatment of environmental issues, which first began with the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, has been permeated by North-South differences. The 1997 Kyoto Conference on Climate Change heard echoes of the North-South conflict when developing countries insisted that industrial countries make the first reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. Those echoes still persisted at the 2009 Copenhagen conference on climate change. The G-77, however, is no longer as cohesive a group; its members' interests increasingly diverged in the 1980s when some states, especially in Southeast Asia, achieved rapid economic growth and as many developing countries shifted from statist-oriented economic policies to neoliberal ones, calling for open markets and privatization. Chapter 5 discusses these shifts further as well as the increased emphasis on poverty alleviation that accompanied the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** approved in 2000.

World Politics Since the Cold War's End

The Cold War's end in 1990 meant not only new cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council but also a resurgence of nationalism, civil wars, and ethnic conflicts; the new phenomenon of failed states; and a related series of humanitarian crises. The consequence was greater demands than ever before on the United Nations to deal with threats to peace and security as well as environmental and developmental issues, democratization, population growth, humanitarian crises, and other problems. UN peacekeepers were called on to rebuild Cambodia; create peace in Bosnia; organize and monitor postconflict elections in Nicaragua, Namibia, and many other places; monitor human rights violations in El Salvador; and oversee humanitarian relief in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), East Timor, and Afghanistan. Beginning with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the UN's enforcement powers were used more in the post–Cold War era than at any previous time.

With the spread of **democratization** to all regions of the globe from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and states created from the former Soviet Union to Africa and Asia, many authoritarian governments in the late 1980s and 1990s were forced to open their political processes to competing political parties, adopt more stringent human rights standards, and hold free elections. Since 1990 the UN has been in heavy demand to provide observers for elections in countries around the world. UN-sanctioned intervention in Haiti in 1993 marked the first time the UN took action to restore a democratically elected government. In Namibia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and East Timor, the UN was called upon to assist with organizing the elements of newly independent states, including the provision of transitional administrations, writing of constitutions, training of police and judges, and organization of elections.

By 1995, however, the early post–Cold War optimism about the United Nations had faded. The peacekeepers in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda found little peace to be kept, although their presence did alleviate much human suffering. Despite almost continuous meetings of the UN Security Council and numerous resolutions, the UN's members lacked the political will to provide the military, logistical, and financial resources needed to deal adequately with these and other complex situations. In addition, the UN faced a deep financial crisis in the late 1990s caused by the increased cost of peacekeeping and other activities and the failure of many members, including the United States, to pay their assessed contributions. The organization clearly needed significant reforms to meet the increased demands and address weaknesses in its structures and operations, but member states failed to use either the occasion of the UN's fiftieth anniversary in 1995 or the UN's sixtieth anniversary in 2005 to approve many of the necessary

changes. The UN did not stand still, however. Some changes could be made without member states' approval; other reforms were approved at the 2005 World Summit. And, in its responses to many complex conflicts, humanitarian crises, new threats to peace posed by nuclear weapons proliferation and terrorism, as well as persistent global poverty, the UN demonstrated that it was still central to many aspects of global governance, as discussed in subsequent chapters.

Well before the Cold War's end, the UN played an important role on a nexus of **interdependence** issues by convening global conferences and summits on topics ranging from the environment, food, housing, the law of the sea, disarmament, women, and water to human rights, population and development, and social development. These conferences have articulated new international norms; expanded international law; set agendas for governments, as well as for the UN itself, through programs of action; and promoted linkages among the growing communities of **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** active on different issues, the UN, and member states' governments.

Still, the UN has never played a central role in international economic relations. Although economic topics have appeared on the agendas of the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the major decisionmaking has always taken place in institutions that have never really been part of the UN system: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the **Group of 7 (G-7)**, as well as in Washington, Tokyo, London, and the headquarters of major corporations and banks. The UN has, however, been active from its earliest years in efforts to promote economic and social development, introducing the ideas of development aid in the 1950s, sustainable development in the 1980s, and human development in the 1990s. Many of the global conferences contributed other ideas and reinforced understanding of the way development overlaps with the status of women, population, food, and other problems. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan used the occasion of the new millennium to convene a Millennium Summit in 2000. In suggesting the special gathering, the secretary-general hoped "to harness the symbolic power of the millennium to the real and urgent needs of people everywhere."[2] His special report, *We the Peoples*, provided his views of the state of the world, the major global challenges, and the need for structural reform of the UN itself. The three days of meetings drew the largest gathering of world leaders ever: There were 147 heads of state or government and representatives from forty-four other countries.

The Millennium Declaration adopted at the close of the extraordinary summit reflected the high degree of consensus on two priorities: peace and development. Different leaders had stressed different aspects of the issues, ranging from globalization and nuclear weapons to fairer economic systems, ethnic tolerance, and human immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). They had disagreed

about how to restructure the UN, but not about the importance of the world organization; they concurred with lofty language about values and principles and also committed themselves to the series of specific objectives known as the MDGs that include halving the number of people living on less than one dollar a day by the year 2015 and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other major diseases. The declaration outlined special measures to meet the needs of Africa, and it intensified efforts to reform the Security Council, to strengthen ECOSOC and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to make the General Assembly a more effective deliberative and policymaking body, and to ensure that the UN has the resources to carry out its mandates. The MDGs and their implementation are discussed further in Chapters 5 and 7.

Rising globalization has been a major feature of world politics since the Cold War's end. **Globalization** is the process of increasing worldwide integration of politics, economics, social relations, and culture that often appears to undermine state sovereignty. In the 1990s this process of increased connectivity greatly accelerated, especially in the area of economic activities across state borders with the rapid growth in flows of finance, goods and services (trade), and investment, as well as diffusion of technology. Many regard globalization as desirable because it has fueled greater prosperity and higher standards of living in many parts of the world. Others, however, point to the growing inequality among and within nations and the ways in which globalization creates both winners and losers, such as those whose jobs in developed countries are lost to workers in developing countries who are paid lower wages. There is also the dark side of globalization that has facilitated the growth of trafficking in drugs, persons, and other criminal enterprises.

The UN itself and various **specialized agencies** within the UN system have struggled to address globalization issues. Although the International Labour Organization, World Health Organization (WHO), and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) are very much involved in globalization-related issues of labor, health, and intellectual property rights, the fact that the targets of antiglobalization protesters have been the World Bank, IMF, G-7, and WTO underscores the UN's marginal role in international economic relations. Yet globalization has fueled the growth of NGOs. Subsequent chapters illustrate how the UN and NGOs, which represent what some have called global civil society, are working out new partnerships that will make each more responsive to globalization issues.

The emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower has been a related aspect of post–Cold War world politics, the era of globalization, and the early twenty-first century. The economic and military capabilities of the United States have far exceeded those of any other state, and, with the collapse of the So-

viet Union, the United States had no serious rival. Many worried that this development would result in the UN's marginalization, particularly if, or when, the United States chose to act unilaterally. This view was borne out when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 in defiance of international opposition. An alternative view was that the UN could become a puppet of the sole superpower, dependent upon its goodwill for funding and subservient in authorizing US actions. Yet in the late 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century, we have seen groups of states and of NGOs willing to push ahead with policy initiatives even when the United States has opposed them, examples being the International Criminal Court, the Convention on Landmines, the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, and its successor. Although its support has fluctuated, in fact, the United States has always been important to the United Nations, as discussed further in Chapter 3.

Now, with the rapid rise of China, India, South Africa, Brazil and other emerging powers as well as the reassertiveness of Russia (a group collectively known as the **BRICS**), world politics is again shifting, and the years ahead will likely see significant changes in how these shifts play out within the UN. Already in international economic relations, the G-7 has been effectively replaced by the **Group of 20 (G-20)**, and the emerging powers have pushed for changes in their voting shares within the World Bank and IMF. The reform of UN Security Council membership will gain new attention and urgency with these power shifts.

To understand the links between world politics and the United Nations, it is also important to examine the major international relations theories to see how they explain global changes and the roles of IGOs such as the UN.

CONTENDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

For much of the post–World War II era, **realist theory**, or **realism**, provided the dominant explanation for international politics. Realists see states as the most important actors in the international system. They view states as unitary actors that define their national interests in terms of maximizing power and security. States' **sovereignty** means that they coexist in an anarchic international system and, therefore, must rely primarily on themselves to manage their own insecurity through balance of power, alliances, and deterrence. International rules (law) and norms, as well as international organizations, do not carry much weight with realists because they lack enforcement power. In realists' view, IGOs and NGOs are marginal actors. IGOs, in particular, do not enjoy autonomy or capability for independent action on the world stage. Rather, they reflect the interests of their members, especially the most powerful ones. In this

view, the UN is constrained by its members' willingness to work through it in dealing with specific problems, to comply with and support its actions, to provide peacekeeping contingents (military or civilian), and to pay for its regular operations and special programs. In realist theory, cooperation among states is not impossible, but states have little incentive to enter into international arrangements, and they are always free to exit from them.[3]

For many international relations scholars, however, realist theory is an inadequate theoretical framework for analyzing world politics, and especially the rapid changes since the Cold War's end as well as the expanded practice of **multilateralism** and the activities of the UN and other IGOs. One major alternative is **liberalism**.[4]

Liberals regard states as important actors, but they place importance on a variety of other actors in the international system, including IGOs, NGOs, **multinational corporations (MNCs)**, and even individuals. States, in their view, are pluralistic, not unitary, actors. Moral and ethical principles, power relations, and bargaining among different domestic and transnational groups and changing international conditions shape states' interests and actions. There is no single definition of national interest; rather, states vary in their goals, and their interests change. Liberal theorists characterize the international system as an interdependent one in which there is both cooperation and conflict and where actors' mutual interests tend to increase over time. States' power matters, but it is exercised within a framework of international rules and institutions that help to make cooperation possible.

Neoliberal institutionalists have provided a somewhat different explanation for why cooperation occurs. For classical liberals, cooperation emerges from establishing and reforming institutions that permit cooperative interactions and prohibit coercive actions. For neoliberal institutionalists, cooperation emerges when actors have continuous interactions with each other. Institutions help prevent cheating; they reduce transaction and opportunity costs for those who seek gains from cooperation within them. Institutions are essential; they build upon common interests. They help to shape state's interests and state preferences. IGOs such as the United Nations make a difference in world politics by altering state preferences and establishing rules that constrain states. They are not merely pawns of the dominant powers but actually modify state behavior by creating habits of cooperation and serving as arenas for negotiation and policy coordination.

For some liberal theorists, the growth of multilateralism, IGOs, and international law is indicative of a nascent international society in which actors consent to common rules and institutions and recognize common interests as well as a common identity or sense of "we-ness." Within this emerging society, international institutions are changing the way states and other actors interact

with each other. Many scholars argue that the growing role of nongovernmental actors represents an emerging global civil society.[5]

A third and relatively recent approach to international relations is **constructivism**, which has become important for studying various aspects of global governance, particularly the role of norms and institutions. Constructivism has several variants, and questions have arisen about whether it is a theory of politics. Yet it offers a valuable way of studying how shared beliefs, rules, organizations, and cultural practices shape the behavior of states and other actors as well as their identities and interests. Among the key norms affecting state behavior in constructivists' view is multilateralism. Several studies have examined the impact of norms and principled beliefs on international outcomes such as the evolution of the international human rights **regime**, bans on certain types of weapons, and humanitarian intervention in which the UN and other IGOs have played a role. They have found that international organizations can be not only "teachers" but also "creators" of norms; as such, they can socialize states into accepting certain political goals and values.[6]

Constructivists tend to see IGOs as actors that can have independent effects on international relations and as arenas in which discussions, persuasion, education, and argument take place that influence government leaders', businesspeople's, and NGO activists' understandings of their interests and of the world in which they live. The consequences are not always positive, however, because IGOs can also stimulate conflicts, their actions may not necessarily be in the interests of their member states, and IGO bureaucracies such as the UN Secretariat may develop agendas of their own, be dysfunctional, lack accountability, tolerate inefficient practices, and compete for turf, budgets, and staff.[7]

Realism, liberalism, and constructivism, then, are different "lenses" through which scholars view world politics and the United Nations.

DILEMMAS THE UN FACES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

No matter which theory one finds most valuable, understanding the role of the UN in the twenty-first century requires the exploration of three dilemmas.

Dilemma 1: Needs for Governance Versus the UN's Weaknesses

The United Nations has faced increasing demands that it provide peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, initiate international regulation to halt environmental degradation and alleviate poverty and inequality in the world, promote greater human economic and social well-being, provide humanitarian relief to victims of natural disasters and violence, and protect human rights for various

groups. These are demands for global governance—not world government—demands for rules, norms, and organizational structures to manage transboundary and interdependence problems that states acting alone cannot solve, such as terrorism, crime, drugs, environmental degradation, pandemics, and human rights violations.[8]

These governance demands test the capacity and the willingness of states to commit themselves to international cooperation and the capacity of the UN and other international organizations to function effectively. Can they meet these new demands without simply adding more programs? How can the initiatives be funded? Can the UN be more effective in coordinating the related activities of various institutions, states, and NGOs? Can it improve its own management and personnel practices? Can it adapt to deal with the changing nature of conflicts and persistent poverty and inequality? The most important issues concerning the global economy are discussed and decided outside the UN system. The UN Charter's provisions are designed for interstate conflicts, yet most post–Cold War conflicts have been intrastate civil wars. The UN's membership has grown from 50 to 193 states. The Security Council was structured to reflect power realities in 1945, not the twenty-first century.

Clearly, the UN needs to reform to increase its capacity to meet new demands, to mobilize resources, to reflect the changing distribution of power and authority in the twenty-first century, and to strengthen its links with nonstate actors. One of the UN's strengths to date has been its flexibility in response to new issues and a membership more than three times the size of the original membership. Its weaknesses are the rigidity of its central structures, its slowness to accommodate nonstate actors and the changing realities of geopolitics, and the continuing inability of member states to agree about major reforms. It has also been weakened by states' failure to meet their commitments for funding and their reluctance to empower the UN Secretariat too much. Yet the current demands for global governance require the commitment of states and enhanced institutional capacity in the UN; they therefore also require that states give up more of their sovereignty. This leads to the second dilemma.

Dilemma 2: Sovereignty Versus Challenges to Sovereignty

The longstanding principles of state sovereignty and nonintervention in states' domestic affairs are affirmed in the UN Charter, yet sovereignty has eroded on many fronts and is continually challenged in this era of globalization by issues and problems that cross states' borders and that states cannot solve alone. Historically, sovereignty empowered each state to govern all matters within its territorial jurisdiction. **Nonintervention** is the related principle that obliges other states and international organizations not to intervene in matters within the internal or domestic jurisdiction of a sovereign state. Global telecommunications,

including the Internet, and economic interdependencies such as global financial markets, international human rights norms, international election monitoring, and environmental regulation are among the many developments that infringe on states' sovereignty and traditional areas of domestic jurisdiction. The growing activities of IGOs and NGOs have eroded the centrality of states as the primary actors in world politics. For example, Amnesty International (AI) and the International Commission of Jurists have been key actors in promoting human rights, sometimes exerting more influence than states themselves. Multinational corporations with operations in several countries and industry groups such as oil, steel, textiles, automobiles, and shipping are important players in trade and climate change negotiations, some having more resources than some states. Partnerships between the UN and private sector, including multinational corporations, have become increasingly important for a variety of governance challenges. The Global Compact initiated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999 was a step in this direction.

How is sovereignty challenged by these developments? Global telecommunications and particularly the Internet as well as heightened economic interdependence have diminished the control that governments can exercise over the information their citizens receive, the value of their money, financial transactions, and the health of their countries' economies. NGOs can influence legislators and government officials both from within countries and from outside through transnational networks and access to the media.

International norms and rules, such as those on trade, the seas, intellectual property rights, ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), and women's rights, have been established through UN-sponsored negotiations. They set standards for states and relevant industries as well as for consumers and citizens. When states themselves accept commitments to uphold these standards (by signing and ratifying international treaties and conventions), they are simultaneously exercising their sovereignty (the commitment they make) and accepting a diminution of that sovereignty (the agreement to international standards that will then be open to international monitoring). Climate change poses particularly daunting challenges for both global governance and state sovereignty.

Although multilateral institutions in theory take actions that constitute intervention in states' domestic affairs only with their consent, there is now a growing body of precedent for **humanitarian intervention**, which has emerged as a new norm of **responsibility to protect (R2P)** to justify international actions to alleviate human suffering during violent conflicts without the consent of the "host" country. It was first invoked to provide food relief and reestablish civil order in Somalia in 1993–1994, then to justify the bombing of Yugoslavia and Kosovo by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999, and to call for international action against genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2005–2006. The

2005 World Summit endorsed the R2P norm, but many states, particularly developing countries, feared its consequences for the norms of nonintervention and sovereignty. The case of Libya in 2011 is discussed in Chapter 4.

Despite these apparent limitations on states' sovereignty, the reality remains that "the capacity to mobilize the resources necessary to tackle global problems also remains vested in states, therefore effectively incapacitating many international institutions."[9] That includes the United Nations. Thus, the dilemma associated with state sovereignty links also to the third dilemma: the need for leadership.

Dilemma 3: The Need for Leadership

World politics in the twenty-first century was marked initially by the dominance of the United States as the sole superpower and a diffusion of power among many other states, the European Union (EU), and a wide variety of nonstate actors that exercise influence in different ways. As noted above, however, even before the end of the first decade, it was apparent that the rise of emerging nations such as Brazil, India, and China as well as constraints on the United States were leading to shifting patterns of power and leadership. Yet traditional measures of power in international politics do not necessarily dictate who will provide leadership or be influential within the UN.

Multilateral institutions such as the UN create opportunities for small and middle powers as well as for NGOs, groups of states, and IGOs' executive heads to exercise initiative and leadership. UN secretaries-general, in fact, have often been important figures in the international arena depending on their personality and willingness to take initiatives such as mediating conflicts or proposing responses to international problems that may or may not prove acceptable to member states. Both Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan are noted, for example, for their leadership both within and outside the UN. Prominent individuals, such as former Australian prime minister Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun of Algeria, who chaired the independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that in 2001 proposed the new norm of responsibility to protect as an obligation of states, can exercise leadership through technical expertise and diplomatic skill. Middle powers such as Australia, Canada, Brazil, and India have been influential in international trade negotiations on agricultural issues, as they have long been in peacekeeping and development. Canada provided leadership for the effort in the late 1990s to ban antipersonnel land mines, while Norway led a similar effort on cluster munitions that culminated in a treaty in 2008. Brazil, Japan, and India led the effort in 2005 to secure Security Council reform.

NGOs can also provide leadership along with states, UN secretaries-general, and other prominent individuals. The success of both the land-mine and cluster-

munitions efforts owed much to the leadership of coalitions of NGOs. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been a lead actor in international efforts since the late 1980s to analyze data on climate and to promote efforts to address the problem.

Still, states matter, and leadership from major powers with resources and influence matters. Hence, the dilemma. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States became the sole remaining superpower—the only state with intervention capabilities and interests in many parts of the globe. US economic, military, technological, and other resources still vastly exceed those of all other countries, notwithstanding China's rapid economic growth and emergence as a major economic power. The US gross domestic product is more than two and a half times that of China, whose GDP surpassed Japan's in 2010, and the American military expenditure is almost half that of the entire world. Power disparity such as this may still make the United States "bound to lead," but the style of leadership required in a world marked by multilateralism is not one of unilateral action but one geared to building coalitions and consensus and achieving active consultation and cooperation.

Furthermore, dominance tends to inspire resistance. A dominant power can rely on its sheer weight to play hardball and get its way—up to a point. The prolonged insurgency and failures in Iraq following US military intervention in 2003 demonstrated the limits of hard power. Leadership (and inspiring follower-ship) depends on soft power's inspiration and cultivation. In the late 1990s, US opposition to the creation of the International Criminal Court, the convention banning antipersonnel land mines, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change signaled a "go-it-alone" pattern that continued in the early years of the twenty-first century with the Bush administration's opposition to international treaties and invasion of Iraq.[10] This made many countries less willing to accept US dominance.[11] It also fueled anti-Americanism in many parts of the world.[12] Consequently, the United States lost a good deal of its soft power and ability to lead. President Obama has rectified some of that and been more inclined to forge international consensus, limiting US interventions, mindful also of the constraints of the US budget deficit and military commitments. In any case, the history of US engagement with the UN is one of "mixed messages" and considerable variation. As discussed further in Chapter 3, Congress blocked full payment of US dues to the UN from the mid-1980s until 2000, and with the huge budget deficit, as well as Republican majority in the House of Representatives following the 2010 midterm elections, US payments to the UN are targeted for cuts again.

In a world of emerging powers, the likelihood that the United States can lead, even when it chooses to, is inevitably diminished. Yet those rising powers may not be willing or able to assume leadership either.

CONCLUSION

Subsequent chapters explore these dilemmas in the context of different areas of UN activity. Chapter 2 outlines the historical foundations of the United Nations and describes the various structures, politics, and processes within it as well as efforts at reform. Chapter 3 considers the major actors in the UN system, including NGOs, coalitions and blocs, small states and middle powers, and the United States and other major powers, as well as the UN secretary-general and the Secretariat. Chapter 4 deals with the UN's role in peace and security issues, including peacekeeping, enforcement, peacebuilding, humanitarian intervention, counterterrorism, and nuclear proliferation, with case studies of Somalia, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Darfur. In Chapter 5, which covers the role of the UN system in promoting development, we explore case studies of women and development and the MDGs and poverty alleviation. Chapter 6 analyzes the role of the UN in the evolution of international human rights norms with case studies of the anti-apartheid movement, the women's rights agenda, human trafficking, and the issues of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Chapter 7 on **human security** deals with environmental degradation and health issues, with case studies of ozone and climate change and HIV/AIDS. It also includes a case study of statebuilding for human security in Haiti. Chapter 8 explores the questions of what the UN has done best, where it has fallen short, and whether and how it can make a difference in the world of the twenty-first century.

To aid readers in pursuing further research on the subject matter in the book, we have provided lists by topic area of sources for additional research at the end of the book along with Internet sites. The notes with each chapter are also an excellent place to start for learning more.

Notes

1. Inis L. Claude Jr., *The Changing United Nations* (New York: Random House, 1965), 32.

2. Christopher S. Wren, "Annan Says All Nations Must Cooperate," *New York Times,* September 6, 2000.

3. See, for example, Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); and John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1994–1995): 5–49.

4. See, for example, Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1151–1169; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence,* 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2001); and Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 39–51.

5. See, for example, Ronnie Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 3 (1992): 398–399; and Craig Warkentin, *Reshaping World Politics: NGOs, the Internet, and Global Civil Society* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

6. See, for example, John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," in *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form,* ed. John Gerard Ruggie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 3–47; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 391–416.

7. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

8. Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst, *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance,* 2nd ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009).

9. Thomas G. Weiss and Ramesh Thakur, *Global Governance and the UN: An Unfinished Journey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

10. Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, eds., *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

11. David M. Malone and Yuen Foong Khong, eds., *Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspectives* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

12. Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).