

**In December 1942 British parliamentarian Anthony Eden, told the House of Commons that the general objective of the Allied powers was to “form a world system for ensuring the peaceful developments of all people.”**

**Baehr and Gordenker said of the UN at the end of the twentieth century, “with almost no exception, every government in the world considers it important to belong to the United Nations. They find uses for the organisation. . .in seeking international cooperation and the peaceful negotiations of differences.”**

**Describe the evolution of the discourse about the United Nations, from Eden to Gordenker. Identify some of the major factors that have assisted, restrained or changed the UN project. How far is the UN from realising the Eden vision?**

On 1 January 1942 representatives of twenty-six nations endorsed the Atlantic Charter and agreed to fight the Axis powers.<sup>1</sup> This ‘Grand Alliance’ incorporated the major Allied Powers and was the genesis of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> The United Nations declaration stated wartime victory was a prelude to the creation of a permanent system for general international security. At the heart of this system would be an international organisation capable of saving ‘succeeding generations from the scourge of war.’<sup>3</sup> The United Nations, in contrast to its pre-war predecessor the League of Nations, would be a ‘League with teeth.’<sup>4</sup> There is considerable debate over what, if any, progress there has been in pursuit of this vision.

International relations theorists might contend the UN is a state centred approach to governance in a Clausewitzian and Hobbesian world. Such a realist standpoint may view the UN as an instrument of major power foreign policy. Another perspective holds a variety of contemporary phenomena strain this traditional state-centric approach. These include technology, the world economy, human rights, nuclear weapons and non-state organisations such as transnational corporations and non-government organisations. Urquart and Groom suggest dealing with global issues provides the key to global governance.<sup>5</sup> The complex interdependence of the modern

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson, D., *Europe Since Napoleon*, Penguin, New York, 1985, p.778 outlines the Atlantic Charter and p. 876 covers the ‘Declarations by United Nations.’

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, A., How Did The United Nations Begin? in *The United Nations Organisational Handbook*, Pilot Press Inc, New York, 1946, pp. 27-28 highlights the use of the term United Nations as a substitute for military term ‘allies’. The Grand Alliance was a term, used by Churchill. The ‘Grand Alliance’ included the four major Allied powers; USA, UK, USSR, and China. Until 1971, China meant the Republic of China on Taiwan, and since then, the People’s Republic of China in Beijing.

<sup>3</sup> Preamble of the Charter of the UN in *Evolution of the UN in United Nations Study Guide*, Deakin University, Geelong, 2002, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> Boyd, A., *One World in Two Minds in United Nations: Piety, Myth, and Truth*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1962, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Urquart, B and Childers, E., *A World in Need of Leadership: Tomorrow’s United Nations*, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, 1990, pp.7-14 indicate the UN must extend beyond its current sectoral approach. Groom, AJR. *Global Governance and the United Nations* in Thakur, R., [ed] *The United Nations at Fifty; Retrospect and Prospect*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin and the Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1995, pp.277-299 believes a decline in US power creates a vacuum for the UN to fill.

world creates the need for a global civil society. Within Kropotkin anarchy, such a society cooperates for the common well being.<sup>6</sup> Morality replaces power as the mainstay of this society. This dialectical bifurcation covers the extremities of the debate. Whatever the truth both external and internal factors influence and shape the progress of the UN. The latter includes the role of the Secretary-General, the operations of various UN agencies and the structural composition of the organisation. External factors include Western power domination, the North-South conflict, East-West rivalry, and the end of the Cold War. These factors largely parallel historical periods and provide a useful framework to consider the evolution of the UN towards forming a 'world system for...the peaceful development of all people.'<sup>7</sup>

Designing a 'league with teeth' was a collaborative effort between the 51 foundation nations.<sup>8</sup> International cooperation at Dumbarton Oaks (1944) and San Francisco (1945) produced an organization with two major components. The Security Council includes the five Great Powers of World War 2 as permanent members. The council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The other major component is the General Assembly. The Assembly consists of representative of all member states. The Assembly has control over economic and social development, and organisational finances through Article 17. These two organs are responsible for progressing the charter of the UN and preventing the organisation from becoming a 'mere talking shop.'<sup>9</sup>

Ruggie argues the birth of the UN as a multilateral organization is a direct derivative of *American* hegemony in the post war era.<sup>10</sup> American power and influence shaped the UN upon American institutions and principles. The UN affords all members a taste of liberal democratic principles and norms. Consequently, commentators such as Bertrand note the dominance of the UN by the West during its early formative years.<sup>11</sup>

Bertrand contends the Korean War was a US campaign to 'cloth a cold war confrontation in the UN flag.'<sup>12</sup> Rafts of failures, from the ongoing intransigence in Kashmir and Palestine to indifference to the war in Indonesia, highlight the impotence of the UN as an actor capable of maintaining peace and security. Even the Secretary – General's personal diplomatic success during the Berlin blockade does not cloak the

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<sup>6</sup> Turner, S., *Global Civil Society, Anarchy and Governance: Assessing an Emerging Paradigm*, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol 35, Issue 1, 1998, pp.37-38.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Eden quoted in Boyd, *The United Nations Organisational Handbook*, p.28.

<sup>8</sup> Boyd, op.cit., pp.29-30 describes the genesis of the UN. The fifty-first nation, Poland, did not attend the conferences as originally there was no working government. However, it was agreed Poland should rank as an originating member.

<sup>9</sup> Boyd, A., *The General Assembly in The United Nations Organisational Handbook*, Pilot Press Inc, New York, p.51.

<sup>10</sup> Ruggie, J.G (ed.), *Multilateralism Matters The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p.30.

<sup>11</sup> Bertrand, M., *The United Nations Past, Present and Future*, Kluwer Law International, London, 1994, pp.37-45.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.42.

Western (ab) use of ‘their’ international organization. As Vandenbosch and Hogan report, ‘the real problem of the UN is the development of a sufficient degree of cooperation among its members, and especially the Great Powers.’<sup>13</sup> Without the creation of common interests, acceptance of common norms and practice of common law, the UN would become more a ‘battleground than. . . a peace chamber.’<sup>14</sup>

This ideological struggle between the two superpowers remained constant from 1956-1965. The East-West rivalry created a bipolar world and prevented the promotion of a common outlook. Bloomfield’s promotion of the rule of law in international disputes contains clear condemnation of the Soviets’ ‘antisocial international behaviour.’<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Griffin reports the UN assisted the ‘Communist blueprint for world conquest’.<sup>16</sup> However, this period also marks the start of decolonisation – a process partially sponsored by the UN through the emancipation of trust territories.

Within this timeframe the member states grew from 51 to 114. More states meant more voices within the world, and the UN. Coriolanus claimed the UN became a ‘mass of dangerous contradictions.’<sup>17</sup> Boyd believed decolonisation equaled a loss of sovereignty for Britain. British conservatives such as Lord Hinchinbrooke viewed ‘the UN is fast becoming Britain’s principal enemy.’<sup>18</sup> Importantly, the UN began to find its own voice – the Blue Helmets, UNEF, and actions in the Congo all support this claim. Nonetheless, perhaps the most critical voice remains American.

Ascoli, for example, identifies the future of the UN as ‘an instrument for recognition among, and to some extent for Governments’.<sup>19</sup> He asserts the need for US leadership to uphold the UN as an exemplar of Western institutions. Bloomfield supports this through encouraging US commitment to the International Court of Justice.<sup>20</sup> At this early juncture, the UN appears as a state driven organisation locked within realist notions of governance and power. Progress towards world peace and global governance is stymied by Realpolitik. Developments between 1956-89 undermine this paradigm.

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<sup>13</sup> Vandenbosch, A and Hogan, W. N., *The Security Council in The United Nations: Background, Organisation, Functions, Activities*, Greenwood Press, Publishers, Westport, Connecticut. p.150.

<sup>14</sup> Luard in Bertrand, op.cit., p.38.

<sup>15</sup> Bloomfield, L.P., *Toward a Rule of Law in The United Nations and US Foreign Policy: A New Look at the National Interest*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, USA, 1960, p.245.

<sup>16</sup> Griffin, E.G., *The Master Planners: Communist Control of the United Nations – Baby Carriages in The Fearful Master: A Second Look at the United Nations*, Western Islands Publishers, Boston, 1964, p.71

<sup>17</sup> ‘Coriolanus’, *The Glass Lie*, W.H Allen, London, 1965, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Boyd, *United Nations: Piety, Myth, and Truth*, p.10.

<sup>19</sup> Ascoli, M., *The Future of the UN*, in Moore Jr, Raymond A (ed) *The United Nations Reconsidered*. Studies in International Affairs No 2, Institute of International Studies, University of South Carolina, 1963, p.89.

<sup>20</sup> Bloomfield, op.cit., p.243.

One development was the political disintegration of the world. This clash between developing and developed nations defines the North-South conflict. A conflict played out on the stage of the UN. The new states sought to exercise power to legitimate their sovereignty. The developing nations used the General Assembly to progress their economic and political agenda.

The superpowers embrace of bilateral negotiations indicated the UN was peripheral to their vital interests. Détente certainly signaled the marginal nature of the UN in peace and security matters. Elmandjra's analysis confirms the real and constitutional marginality of the UN system.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Young notes the growth of influential interdependencies within the international system.<sup>22</sup> Such complexities may transform the international community.

Hoffman indicates international organisations help nations transcend the limitations of the nation state.<sup>23</sup> These organisations provide the nucleus for international civil society. Young again notes the UN role as norm creator for such a society.<sup>24</sup> In many respects, the UN during this period was less a regulating agent and proponent for change but rather a symbol of the future. Brucan writes of a utopian World Authority exercising power in its own right. This represents a transition from the rhetoric of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, as Brucan educes perhaps the greatest merit of the idea is to make people think about it.<sup>25</sup> For the onset of the post Cold war era and its global issues require a global and moral emphasis.

In 1987, Gorbachev noted a number of global phenomena – technology, economics, refugees to name a few. These issues transcend territorial boundaries and defy national solutions. In a partially post-Clausewitzian age, Urquart ponders whether security is limited to the military realm. Meanwhile,<sup>26</sup> Groom questions the validity of sovereignty in a globalised system.<sup>27</sup> Simply, global issues require global solutions.

Groom state the 'challenge is to design a system of global governance.'<sup>28</sup> Such a system requires norms, laws, multilateralism and leadership. In a global age some of these elements may conflict. Singh notes a clash between domestic sovereignty and

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<sup>21</sup> Elmandjra, M., *The United Nations System and the International System in The United Nations System: An analysis*, Archon Books, 1973, pp.19-36.

<sup>22</sup> Young, O.R., *The United Nations and the International System* in Gordenker, L (ed) *The United Nations in International Politics*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, pp.30-59.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman, S., *The Role of International Organisations: Limits and Possibilities* in Waters, M (ed) *The United Nations: International Organisations and Administration*, The Macmillan Company, London, 1967, p.53.

<sup>24</sup> Young, op.cit., pp.34-35.

<sup>25</sup> Brucan, S., *The United Nations as World Authority* in Harrod, J. and Schrijver N., (eds). *The UN Under Attack*, Gower, Sydney, 1988, p.16.

<sup>26</sup> Urquart, loc.cit.

<sup>27</sup> Groom, op.cit., p.298.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.299.

the principle of human rights.<sup>29</sup> Turner finds the discourses of global civil society are not always compatible or consistent.<sup>30</sup> Arguably, elements of such a society and a system already exist.

The principles enshrined in the UN Charter provide a useful framework for the system. International cooperation and interactions through the UN set a normative structure and behavioural pattern. Global multilateralism is more complex than its immediate post World War 2 predecessor. Conferences such as the Rio Earth Summit gathered a range of state and non-state actors. In a complex and diverse world concerted action of this ilk addresses the issues in a more holistic fashion. Urquart hopes the UN can provide the necessary leadership.<sup>31</sup> However, the most likely candidate here is the US.

US leadership is, however, hamstrung by domestic politics and ambivalence. The right wing conservative Heritage group believe, ‘a world without the UN could be a better one.’<sup>32</sup> American actions, such as pursuit of the Kassebaum amendment, temporary withdrawal from UNESCO and recoil from support of the International Criminal Court, echo this sentiment. Nonetheless, US support is critical to the global project.

The UN was a statist response to the maintenance of the peace in an anarchical world. Initially, the UN represented more a Western controlled institution than the world’s policeman. Consequently, early discourse chose propaganda at the expense of potential. Nonetheless, the UN established the international laws and norms contributing to the global governance debate. Global governance requires both cooperation and morality. For this reason the international system appears poised between Kropotkin anarchy and Hobbesian reality. Certainly, a less statist and more multilateral approach would better address global issues.

These issues undercut Westphalian sovereignty and challenge states to accept a more dynamic approach to interdependence and diversity. In 1942, Anthony Eden wanted a world system to ensure the peaceful development of all people. In 1999, Baehr and Gordenker recognized the need for international cooperation and a peaceful negotiation of differences. Luck says the UN is a relic of big government and statist solutions.<sup>33</sup> However, the UN must transform to meet new expectations as, to paraphrase Baehr and Gordenker, ‘in many ways, its basic appeal surpasses its performance, but its promise remains.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Singh, N., *The UN and the Development of International Law* in Roberts, A and Kingsbury, B, (eds) *United Nations, Divided World: The UN’s role in International Relations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, p.416.

<sup>30</sup> Turner, op.cit., p.34.

<sup>31</sup> Urquart, op.cit., p.9.

<sup>32</sup> Baehr, P.R and Gordenker, L., *The United Nations at the End of the 1990s*, Centre of International Studies, Princeton University, Macmillan Press, London, 1999, p.153.

<sup>33</sup> Luck, E..C., *Old Realities, New Opportunities in Mixed Message: American Politics an International Organisation 1919-1999*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 1999, p.282.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.200.

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