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Strengthening Cooperation Between International Organizations and Governments

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Introduction

The challenges of complex emergencies, disaster relief and emergency compel the international community to think about the most effective ways to use its resources. How to coordinate among the different actors in the international community to insure people affected by disasters get the help they need as quickly as possible. The international community includes sovereign states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and prominent individuals ranging from world leaders to observers and opinion mobilizers. All are involved in disasters, but not always in a coordinated way. They have different perspectives and priorities, different capabilities and authority. How to prevent their responses from working against each other, harming overall responses and reducing the potential to save lives and restore communities?

The major types of actors in disaster response:

- *Home governments*: the government of the country where the emergency occurs. They usually have chief authority; it's their country.
- *Foreign governments*: states offering logistical support, humanitarian supplies, long-term development aid and coordination assistance. They work through their aid and relief agencies, technical agencies, and sometimes their security services for logistical help and security.
- *International organizations* (IOs): UN agencies and other organizations made up of member states. They have some resources of their own, but rely on states and NGOs for most. Their role is largely coordination. But the large number of IOs requires coordination too.
- *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs): a huge community of independent organizations, often with enormous local expertise, especially when they have been engaged in the afflicted country for years. They often have substantial resources and skills to get things done.

Figure 1. Getting bigger and messier?
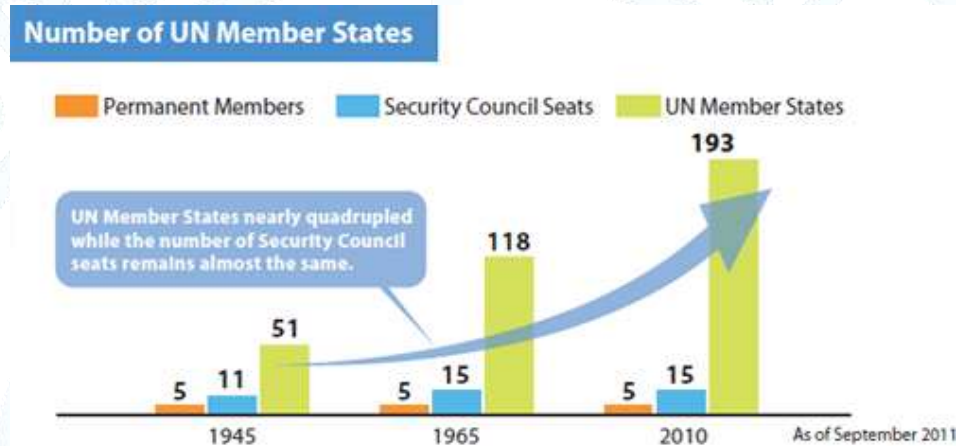
Source: "Security Council Reform: Why Must the Security Council be Reformed?" (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2011).

Cooperation between states and international governmental organizations is essentially vital. Both play vital roles. By themselves, sovereign states lack legitimacy to act; their motives may be suspect. They also struggle to coordinate action. Without its member states, the United Nations would not exist. It would be powerless, for there currently is no true form of international governance aside from those institutions agreed upon by state governments. If these states, for whatever reason, felt that they could no longer cooperate to resolve international issues, or if the international relations system we know it fell apart, the United Nations would be among the first institutions to fail and much of what it could accomplish would be lost. The member states of the UN investigate and oversee international issues, enact resolutions and agree to respect and adhere to these findings. While there will always be rogue states that turn against certain U.N. rulings, it is key that a majority of nations abide by them to insure that the system continues to function as envisioned.

As with most international relation-based issues, there is no simple solution to promote cooperation between international governmental bodies and state governments, nor is there an easy solution to fix interstate conflicts that could be detrimental to International Governance. Here are three hypothetical scenarios of what could possibly take place:
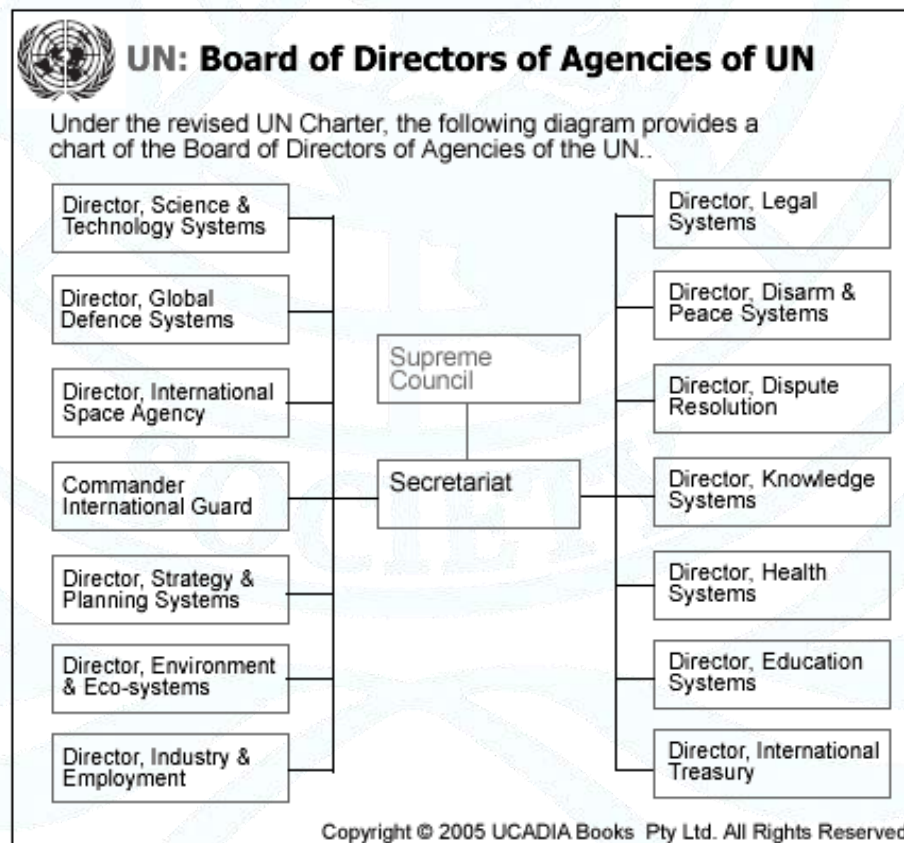
- States could be held responsible to pass legislation or come to agreements outside the confines of the UN. These agreements and laws would grant more powers to the UN and other intergovernmental bodies. Furthermore, states would most likely have to reduce their own power and sovereignty to allow this to take place, and these findings would have to be adapted for implementation into the U.N. system. Moreover, states get to decide what they would be willing to do to promote cooperation on the international

circuit. Since Realist theory suggest that states are unlikely to propose or accept a reduction of their own power, it is almost certain this scenario would never take place.

- Second, The UN could propose and pass a series of reforms that would place more pressure on the states to adopt and uphold UN resolutions, especially those relating to improved communication and cooperation between the organization and its members. States could be required to join certain committees or accept certain policies or else face a reduction of power within the UN body or expulsion from the system altogether. Once again, this solution is not likely to work.

- Third, The UN could be reformed to promote transparency and cooperation. The UN could abandon Cold-war era hierarchies and replace them with new systems that give each state the chance to exert their own voice on important issues outside of the General Assembly, including seat rotations of important influential councils. To keep powerful nations like the US engaged, the UN could work to find solutions to state based problems as well as international issues, blurring the line between state and international institutions. While the U.N. member states, including the influential Security Council would have to agree on these reforms, some of them maybe doable.

Figure 2. Candidate for reform?

UN: Board of Directors of Agencies of UN

Under the revised UN Charter, the following diagram provides a chart of the Board of Directors of Agencies of the UN..

Director, Science & Technology Systems
Director, Global Defence Systems
Director, International Space Agency
Commander International Guard
Director, Strategy & Planning Systems
Director, Environment & Eco-systems
Director, Industry & Employment

Supreme Council
Secretariat

Director, Legal Systems
Director, Disarm & Peace Systems
Director, Dispute Resolution
Director, Knowledge Systems
Director, Health Systems
Director, Education Systems
Director, International Treasury

Upon analyzing these three possible solution paths, it's made evident that United Nations would have to play a major role in facilitating these reforms and resolutions. The states, while still a major part of the solution, should not be looked to as a means of promoting international cooperation on their own terms, nor should the U.N. be viewed as a global power with the ability to bend the will of its member states.

History and Background:

There have been cooperation issues between states and international governmental organizations since the founding of the first institutions. Fortunately, steps have been taking over the years to resolve or lessen these issues, and continue to this day.

In 1919, the League of Nations was developed to promote international cooperation in the post-world war one era. The organization had very little power and many countries including its founder, the United States, never joined as full members. Not surprisingly, the League of Nations became an institutional disaster that failed to promote cooperation among the international community. This is most evident in the League of Nation's inability to thwart the Second World War.

Its successor, the United Nations, has been more successful at promoting international cooperation. Nevertheless, there have been times of stagnation, especially during the Cold War, when international power was divided between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. Needless to say, many resolutions during this time period were vetoed by either side, and states were heavily divided between their own personal interest and that of the global community (the U.N.).

Current Situation

Over the last few months, the Syrian conflict has risen to become one of the United Nations gravest concerns. Nevertheless, problems relating to Syria extend well beyond searching for solutions to end the bloodshed. On August 21th 2013, a devastating chemical weapons attack took the lives of more than 1,400 Syrians. The attack, which indiscriminately killed men, women, and children, shocked the international community; however, there has been much disagreement as to who perpetrated these attacks and how they should be addressed. Within days of the attack, Great Britain, backed by the U.S. and France, proposed a resolution that would call for military action against Syria. As expected, Russia and China rejected the resolution. These two countries, which have been heavily criticized for being apathetic towards or supporting the Assad Regime, have made it a habit to block U.N. interventions against Syria, which proposes the question of whether or not the Security Council can cooperate enough to reach resolutions on military matters. After the resolution failed, the U.S. continued to push for military action against Syria, despite the U.N. resolution. Reacting to this development, President Putin argued in his address to the New York Times that President Obama was undermining the decision of the Security Council, and this acts endangered the legitimacy of the United Nations and its rulings.

This situation presents two arguments. One, what role does the U.N. play in deciding whether or not a state or a coalition of states have the right to intervene in a military crisis and two, is the Security Council working as planned? Is the SC promoting cooperation between states and between states and the intergovernmental body, or is its veto power being used to

promote state agendas and to halt any progression that may lead to a compromise and/or a resolution to conflict.

Role of the United Nations

Despite popular belief, the U.N. is not a global government. Rather, the U.N. is used to rally the support of nation-states to solve and or limit the extent of international problems that could not be solved by one country alone. Thus, in times of conflict, the U.N. lacks the power to undermine the sovereignty of a nation, and often times lacks the resources to enforce its own resolutions without the aid of state actors. Furthermore, in regards to the fostering of cooperation between states and the intergovernmental body, the U.N. can be viewed as a facilitator, and while most reform options will be proposed by the U.N., it's still the responsibility of the states to agree to implement them.

Recent Landmarks

Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have recently made progress fostering cooperation between member states and the United Nations. On 10 September 2013, the General Assembly held two discussions closely related to the topic, with both ending with the adoption of two draft resolutions.

First, a meeting was held to discuss potentially reforming the Economic and Social Council to improve its effectiveness. While some countries, such as Switzerland, questioned whether or not the reforms would noticeable improve the institution, most agreed that the reforms should take place. This resolution brings forth an interesting concept. The United Nations is only as productive and effective as its institutions, and naturally member states would place more hope and effort into an organization or institution that better fulfills their own needs and the needs of the international community. When the reforms will be implemented and whether or not they are successful is another question entirely; nevertheless, the fact that U.N. member states are willing to attempt to strengthen U.N. institutions is a sign that these governing bodies are considered valuable and useful to the nation-states who sponsor them. Naturally, an effective institution will receive more support from its member states; thus, it will be better suited to advance cooperation.

The second hearing focused on "the assembly's intergovernmental process on strengthening and enhancing the effective function of the human rights treaty body system."[1] The United Nation's human rights treaty body system is composed of "independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties".[2] The system is designed to provide a sense of objectivity to the implementation of human rights policies and monitor these programs to ensure they are carried out as planned. The Russian federation, along with the cross-national group, argued that the Intergovernmental process (formed primarily by Russia and the Cross-national group) was needed to ensure that the independent "treaty bodies" were assisted in

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[1] "Resolution 2118." United Nations Security Council, September 27, 2013, 1-13.
[2] ibid

"implementing their obligations."[3] Contradictory, the United States and Australia stated that they believed the treaty bodies must reserve their independence. El Salvador's representatives argued that the treaty bodies "boosted accountably" and strengthened "the capacities of national-level systems". Furthermore, while the debate continues over the role treaty bodies should play in the United Nations human rights sector; their simple existence can be seen as an attempt to foster cooperation between states. Often, these treaty body teams are focused on the successful implement of human rights policy rather than political agendas. The Russian federation's attempt to alter the treaty body system thus far has been met with great disapproval, and 66 states are said to have abstained from voting when it was first introduced in February 2012. In order to truly foster cooperation begin states and intergovernmental organizations, independent teams, like those that make up treaty body system, must retain their autonomy. In fact, the introduction of more independent bodies in other fields of concern, such as economic and social issues, should also be implemented and/or strengthened to ensure that the U.N. remains its objective at all times.

In addition, the Security Council's recent agreement on the Syria conflict illustrates how the U.N. continues to facilitate cooperation on important issues. Resolution 2118 states that the Security Council has agreed that the recent chemical weapons attacks must be condemned and that Bashar Al Assad must be held accountable. The resolution calls for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles and urges Syria to transfer its chemical weapons to the international community as soon as possible. This agreement seems to have thwarted any plans for military intervention by the U.S. in the region, and proposes a somewhat more peaceful solution to the problem. Likewise, it has demonstrated that the U.S. and Russia can agree on resolutions that favor both countries' interest and the interest of the world in general. Syria's willingness to transfer its weapons caches to the U.N, and the United Nation's willingness to obtain and dismantle these arms without use of military force shows how it continues to promote cooperation between its own institutions and its member states.

Country Positions

There are varying view points on the United Nation's role in promoting international cooperation. While most countries agree there is a need for reforms on the issue, there has been little agreement on what these reforms should look like.

The P5

The five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States, the P5) hold the most power in the U.N. they make up the Security Council and can easily veto any resolutions that pass through their jurisdiction. Moreover, this means the P5 has the power to veto most proposals to reform to the U.N. system. Considering most cooperation-reform measures would limit the power of the Security Council and/or remove its current members, the P5 are unlikely to agree to major reforms that would dilute their authority.

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[3] ibid

But they often support resolutions that increase their authority or provide a way to share responsibility.

Other prominent nations

In contrast, non P5 nations are more likely to promote cooperation-based within the U.N. system. Raising powers, like India or Brazil, may find themselves at odds with the current Security Council, unless they are in it that year. Furthermore, there have been some calls among the member states to expand on or alter the current Security Council lineup. In the general assembly, we have seen calls for the strengthening of institutions with in the U.N., such as ECOSOC.

European Union

The European Union countries (28 in all) support aggressive reform of the UN system to facilitate better responses to international emergencies and disasters. They are especially willing to lead reforms that ask states to give up sovereignty to insure better cooperation and faster responses. The European Union maintains that "the international community needs an efficient multilateral system, founded on universal rights and values."[4]

Other Regional Blocs

Unlike the European Union, most regional blocs (like CARICOM or the Arab league) rely entirely on voluntary intergovernmental cooperation to achieve their goals, as the regional organization has little authority in itself. In some regions—including much of Africa and Latin America—there is strong support for reforms of the U.N. system for provision of help, and to improve efficiency and legitimacy. Other regions—Asia is notable—are resistant, preferring to keep authority and control within sovereign state governments.

Non-alignment movements

Like the U.N. the Non-alignment movement, or NAM, aims to promote international cooperation. However, the Non-alignment movement tends to favor its own findings over that of the U.N., which they feel is largely western dominated. Thus, while they feel that the U.N is a stage of international cooperation, its power has not been evenly distributed. The NAM stresses the decline of UN legitimacy due to the failure to adjust to the globalization of people, power and wealth. They often make cooperation conditional on structural reform of the U.N. system.

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[4] European Union, "European Union @ United Nations." Last modified October 06, 2013. Accessed October 7, 2013. http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/.

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