

Schittich, Ingrid (2005): A New Realism: From a UN of Nation States towards a UN of a Global Civil Society.

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1. After the Second World War the United Nations Charter offered a unique chance for all nations to constitute a new policy in which every kind of violence would have been banned. The member states of the UN, however, have not been able, nor have they been willing, to let the substantial parts of the Charter become reality. After the atrocities of the Nazi regime and the Second World War, strong hopes for a renewal in morals and ethics had been aroused. But the new way of thinking that had been hoped for soon turned out to be one in terms of quantity rather than in terms of quality. In the end, the question was no longer one of banning violence altogether, but rather one of discussing the number of victims once violence had occurred. The more the Second World War faded into distant memory, the more the so-called Community of Nations accepted and applied violence as a means of pushing through their power politics. In the course of time they have done so ruthlessly and without any moral scruples.
2. There is virtually no question, however, that there are good reasons for having an organisation like the UN: An organisation like this is indispensable for a peaceful coexistence of nations and for a response to their growing interdependence.
3. During these nearly 60 years of its existence, the UN has neither turned out to be able nor to be willing to prevent exploitation, injustice, oppression, and war, as the nations dominating the UN keep following their line of geopolitical and economic interests.
4. Affiliated to the main bodies of the UN, an innumerable number of institutions, committees, and subcommittees exist and work as if in an ivory tower, whereby even fairly informed citizens outside are not aware of them.
5. The UN will surely not be reformed vis-à-vis itself, as those nations dominating the UN will never be ready to give away their power on their own free will. Changes will only be brought about by political pressure from outside. Thus political pressure must come from NGOs and other representatives of local and global civil society.
6. As a first step to really exercising political pressure, key objectives have to be agreed upon by NGOs and others in order to focus common efforts on common goals. A coordinating body has to be installed in order to compile and evaluate results from the different areas of work. Intensive work like this will be more effective and more easily followed and supported by an interested world public.

7. Those common priorities of work and thought should:

- a) Recognize and guarantee that every human being has the right not only to adequate housing, but also to healthy and sufficient food, as well as the supply of water and air. Water and air are not to be controlled as privatized goods for either commercial or military purposes. (Similar approaches can be found in UN-Habitat and UNITAR papers, e.g. "Access to Basic Services for All").
- b) Require that the UN returns to its most fundamental commitment, namely to create and preserve global peace. Nation states are to be refused the right to wage wars or to support belligerent actions. Wars are illegal not only from a moral point of view: They always violate agreed upon legislation - thus being illegal in a juridical sense as well. The UN must be given the necessary means to ensure that current legislation is respected. In this context, international arms trade is to be banned and prohibited. Nuclear weapons are to be abolished. Already now the Tribunal Movement brought about by global civil society is an important, though merely symbolic, authority showing what should be part of UN tasks.
- c) Place the particular concerns of non-industrialised countries into the very center of international attention in order to fight and overcome colonialism in its old and renewed forms. Without being given closer attention, member states of the Group of 77, all of them so-called developing countries, have worked in the framework of UNCTAD in order to voice their concerns toward the industrialized nations. They urge the UN to implement fair world trade by which the privileges, the exploitative intentions, and the protectionism set up by the economies of the dominant industrial nations are restricted, and by which the developing countries are given equal opportunities on a fair world market.
- d) Establish a Council for Ethical Judgement on a global level which, on behalf of the citizens and the peoples of the world, publicly pronounces moral bans on states and corporations, should they offend the above mentioned principles.

8. Critical reflections on how to re-construct the UN system can only be made if common key priorities are agreed upon.

9. These could be first steps on the way to a re-construction of the UN:

- a) The confusing number of bodies affiliated with the UN is drastically reduced by formulating central areas of work. A reasonable number of such bodies, NGOs and others working on the topics 7a-d of this paper, are represented in the decision-making bodies of the UN and given the right to vote.
- b) Following the proposals of AWC San Francisco and others, civil society is to be integrated into the UN system thus forming a counterbalance to the representation of nation states. (cf. www.worldcitizens.org/globalvillage.html: "Reform and Democratization of the United Nations").
- c) The present "executive" of the UN, the Security Council, is reformed and democratized (e.g. the present right of veto as a symbol of power-oriented privileges is abolished.) In a new UN executive,

"security" does not mean military security alone. This new executive also take action in cases of offence against the principles mentioned in No.7 of this paper.

10. Achieving an efficient reform of the UN is closely related to achieving the development of an empowered democracy consisting of free and self-confident citizens. Most people experience the world through paradigms that perceive individuals not as self-determined and precious beings, but rather as anonymous particles of a crowd or mass. Being caught in structures of subordination of the many and power for the few for thousands of years, humankind has never had a real chance of becoming aware of the fact that each individual life is precious and unique. A homo politicus has not yet emerged. After the Second World War the chance of living up to "true democracy" slipped out of people's hands even before they had learned how to handle it. As economic and political structures of oppression rapidly developed, citizens were again transformed into objects easily manipulated. Unless the perception of the world, and of life itself, is shaped on the basis of profound ethical and moral principles, the emotional and intellectual void of an eventually suicidal society opens up.
11. Achieving an efficient reform of the UN is also related to the future development of the media. On one hand the media seems to have a strong influence on political agents, to the degree that even politics is said to be colonized by the media. On the other hand the media's being embedded in the existing structures of subordination and power seems to be as strong as its being incapable and unwilling to question, let alone to overcome, its being embedded in the system.
12. Should we fail to reform the UN and to transform it into a respected and efficient instrument in the hands of a global society de facto already in existence, then cherished values like democracy, human rights, and peace will vanish one day. We are witnessing steps in this direction at present. A disempowered and silenced world population views outrageous violations of human rights - e.g. in the prisoners' camps of Guantanamo -. In the same way that the world population viewed soldiers - men and women - of the occupying powers in Iraq humiliating and torturing people.