

Humanity as Sovereign: Reforming the United Nations General Assembly

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Abstract

This paper will conduct an examination of the general logistics and feasibility of reforming the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through the creation of a supplemental body in the form of a UN Parliamentary Assembly. While there have been several efforts to reform the United Nations, this specific reform (a UN Parliamentary Assembly) is a relatively new innovation as a consideration in reforming the UN. As the concept of sovereignty continues to evolve, so too have the social institutions (nation-states) that are seen, traditionally, as its primary and most legitimate actors. Through organizational reforms such as a parliamentary assembly it may be possible to increase the authority and legitimacy of the United Nations in order to make it a more effective actor on transnational issues.

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Sincerest thanks to my family for their faith in me. The examples of strength, virtue and love that my parents: Elmer and Sherry and my siblings: Kecia, Bryant and Dominique have embodied give life to my dreams when I am unable to find the will to carry on. I would also like to express my thanks and gratitude for the help of my classmates in reviewing and refining the arguments made herein. Finally, this paper is also dedicated to all of those that dream of a global society guided by an egalitarian understanding of one's membership in a vast and great family known as humankind.

*"Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies,
and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies."*

--Seneca

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CGG Commission on Global Governance	

CIR Commission on Institutional Reform
COG Commission on Globalization
DGCA Deliberative Global Citizens' Assembly
HLPTCS High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Solutions
JIU Joint Inspection Unit
NEC New England College
OSCE Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe
PEGA Popularly Elected Global Assembly
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Program
UNGA United Nations General Assembly
UNPA United Nations Parliamentary Assembly

Chapter One-Introduction

Background

The democratic deficit at the global level without accountable, transparent and responsive institutions restrains the potential for an evolutionary approach to the problems of human governance in the 21st century. As the desire for citizenship at the global level increases, the need for an effective international system that solves problems and represents peoples will also increase. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) could be a useful reform of the UNGA to ameliorate its perceived ineffectiveness.

There is a growing consensus that the scope of issues such as climate change, terrorism, international trade and finance among others have or, are in the process of, outstripping the unilateral or plurilateral capabilities of states to cope. With issues of such far-reaching implications that transcend the ability of individual nations to address alone, the necessity of establishing an effective and accountable international organizational architecture has become paramount. This capstone project will focus on an exploration of the pros and cons of reforming the UN General Assembly within the context of addressing the democratic deficit at the global level by establishing a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly or UNPA consisting initially of representatives appointed by chiefs of state or national legislatures and eventually elected through free, fair and global elections.

As the writer and activist George Monbiot has said, “Everything but our consent has been globalized...” (2004) as the linkages between peoples and cultures continue to strengthen and become more apparent it is important for us as a species to have social institutions that can accommodate this new level of citizenship. It is not simply the problems that implore us to realize some limited but adequate supranational governance but also the societal changes, particularly pronounced in the developed world, characterized by a more cosmopolitan outlook. The crises in confidence that many national constituencies of democratic states confess with respect to their leaders is a symptom of the deficiency of economic globalization without political globalization. It is time for there to be instruments of individual representation and not just state representation on the international level or as mention in the Monbiot quote earlier, ‘for popular consent to be globalized.’

The UN General Assembly with its one-state, one-vote rule which apportions equal voting power between a state such as China (the world’s most populous state and second leading economy) and Nauru and its non-binding resolutions has frequently been relegated to acting merely as a “debating salon” rather than as an effective institutional actor in international affairs. But it is not simply a question of what type of institutional reform might improve the operational effectiveness of the UNGA but the organizational character of that body proposed as such a reform. A 2010 report from the Great Transitions Initiative suggests movement toward a World Parliament but it is applicable to policy innovations that might precede a development: In the near term, the path to a World Parliament could begin without the UN’s official imprimatur. For example, a broad group widely representative of international civil society, in collaboration with sympathetic governments, could organize a global summit to lay out the logistics of electing, housing, financing, and operating the parliament. Once free and fair elections are held, under an appropriate monitoring system set forth in the summit’s treaty, a

novel body of citizens would come into existence which would command immediate attention and respect.

In recognition of this potential variance, this paper will not only examine the positive and negative consequences of the advised reform for the UN General Assembly and its effects on the current realities of global governance, this project will also seek to explore the structural characteristics of a proposed UNPA thereby clearly illustrating the practical superiority, comparatively, to a stand-alone UNGA.

Secondary Research

Much of the current literature focused on UN reform generally is dedicated to the current debate on enlargement of the Security Council or modifications to the office of the UN Secretary-General and administrative Secretariat. In a review of the current literature there is a noticeable trend among developed nations to describe reform as a function closely related to their own ideological motivations rather than as a concerted effort to objectively improve the ability of the organization to fulfill the responsibilities charged to it by the Charter. Reform, in some literature, is an ideological pursuit rather than one guided by pragmatism.

The key debate in current literature centers on an evolutionary or transformative approach to reform of the UN generally and the General Assembly specifically. The debate does not diverge on whether there is a need for reform but on pace, emphasis and logistics. Writers such as Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss (2001), in proposing the transformative route, suggest the replacement of the General Assembly with a popularly elected global assembly. While Andreas Bummel describes the evolutionary aspect of reform in the form of supplementing the General Assembly with a parliamentary assembly as a useful method in creating a more effective policy-making apparatus for problem-solving of issues of a global transnational nature (2008). It is important to reiterate that the difference between the aforementioned advocates is Bummel's (2008) view that a parliamentary assembly is an intermediate step toward an elected assembly. This paper will focus on the feasibility of the UNPA as a stand-alone supplementary institution rather than as a part of a strategy of incremental reform.

Heinrich and Krajewski (2008) provide a theoretical underpinning for the pragmatic elements of the current debate on reform of international institutions. They discuss an 'emergent principle of democratic governance' and the failure to cultivate an upward pressure by citizens and civil society for reform as identifying hallmarks of the postulated international deficit of democracy. In considerations regarding the design of a research approach for testing the thesis and the recommended solution it is important to recognize and utilize the available expertise of eminent officials. The United Nations has a large cadre of current and former officials with the necessary experience to be an immense help with the evaluation and implementation of any recommended reforms. A central part of the research design was conceived based upon a review of the current literature. Commissions have been successfully used as a problem-solving tool within the UN system, particularly as advisory commissions created as subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly or created by the Secretary-General.

Project Approach and Methodology

As a part of the effort to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of establishing a UN parliamentary assembly, several categories of primary data will need to be collected:

- (1) Cost
- (2) Operational Models
- (3) Legal Avenues
- (4) Best Practices Review

This information will be particularly useful in determining what specific recommendations are made on cost, infrastructure and operations of a potential parliamentary assembly. The study of the identified problem and potential solution to be carried out by an independent advisory commission or a high-level panel of experts will focus on the collection of data through interviews, primarily, with some consultation through surveys of individuals unable to participate in interviews in order to fully gather the aforementioned four points of primary data collection.

Implications of Project

Due to the sensitivity of work conducted by the UNGA it is important to protect the integrity of the research process and those who participate. State representatives of the UNGA are appointed by their respective governments, some of which may not be in accord with the opinions and judgments expressed by research participants. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance, to safeguard their identity and privacy generally in order to limit the potential for social and professional repercussions.

Data gathered via surveys, focus groups and interviews will be restricted to the core group of researchers and will be used in the final report and plans of action only to the extent allowed by individual participants. As for one example, a measure that would be critical to the integrity of the project's success is to ensure that each participant within an individual interview or survey participates in a closed environment free of opportunities to share the research material or endanger the integrity of the process in other ways.

Project Limitations

While the intent of the project is to examine and seek to ameliorate a deficit of democracy within global institutions, this project's considerations are limited to the UN General Assembly. Specifically, how the addition of a parliamentary assembly might serve to solve or lessen the extent of the identified problem. One constraint on this project that may make it hard to be perfectly reproducible is the subject. The United Nations is an organization burdened with a purpose that could be described as *sui generis*, or of its own kind. The primary expression of this unique placement in global affairs is its universality. Other regional and international intergovernmental bodies have parliamentary assemblies (ex: The OSCE or Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe, etc.) but their scope is limited.

Another constraint on this project is the centrality of the United Nations to global policy-making through its wide-reaching administrative secretariat, specialized agencies and clout as a major authority, albeit non-binding with respect to the General Assembly, on matters of international peace and security. Reform at the United Nations is a process that has been fraught with setbacks, stalls, and inadequacy for most of the more than 60 years of the organization's

existence. Researchers in the course of completing the gathering of primary data will need to be constantly cognizant of the turbulent internal dynamics represented by numerous stakeholders as the data are analyzed and used to produce conclusions and recommendations.

One final limitation that may complicate project completion is the groups that will need to be involved in order to gather satisfactory data during primary research. Researchers will need to survey and interview current members of the UN General Assembly. This means some of the primary participants in the research effort will be diplomats accustomed to executing the directives and policy of home governments rather than acting with a greater degree of autonomy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The disconnect between the increasing trend of democratic governance among the world's nation-states over the past half-century and the methods through which the United Nations operates is at the heart of what academicians and UN observers describe as a global democracy deficit. Research may indicate that the addition to or replacement of the UN General Assembly with a parliamentary assembly may help to reduce the deficit with respect to democracy of an important global institution such as the United Nations. The addition of a body of elected officials, even in an initial advisory role, could deliver elements of democratic accountability and responsiveness to the UN General Assembly. As international organizations like the UN continue to deepen their capabilities to intervene in affairs once considered solely domestic, the necessity for these organizations to resemble the democratic nature of the states they influence is even more crucial.

Chapter Two-Literature Review

Introduction

A review of secondary literature on the terms “global governance” and “UN reform” returned millions of results on the popular search engine Google and the academic database EbscoHost. Presumably, as a result of the work of a 2005 High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes which suggested reforms of the UN Security Council, much of the literature concerned the debate on changes to that body. A subsequent search on Google and EbscoHost of the terms ‘Global Democracy’ and ‘UN Parliamentary Assembly’ delivered thousands of entries relating to the focus of the project.

The literature review is dedicated to identifying and elaborating upon the perceived deficit of democracy within global institutions, specifically, the UN General Assembly. It will also examine the policy disjuncture that has erupted between the set of contemporaneous policy challenges which are transnational and the current dynamics of a prevailing paradigm of Westphalian state sovereignty tested by the forces of globalization. Finally, the literature review will explore the current debate on reform of the UNGA and the resulting logistical strategies.

Historical Context

The conventional wisdom regarding the United Nations is that it is a moribund organization entombed within the power realities of the period in which it was created. But the UN has undergone almost continuous change since its inception. This has included reforms in the wake of the massive wave of decolonization that swelled membership starting in the 1960s. Recently, this debate on reform has led to the authoring of nearly a half-dozen reports on institutional changes since 1994 (Rivlin, 2005). But this paper will focus upon the efforts to establish a parliamentary assembly to the UN General Assembly.

The campaign to establish a parliamentary assembly has gained considerable momentum since it was first favorably mentioned in a 1995 report by the Commission on Global Governance (Heinrich, 2010). Between the time of the report and the present, a campaign has matured. The Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly now has the support of over 800 parliamentarians but the primary hindrance to this reform and others is the preference of states to retain as much sovereignty as possible at the expense of creating a more effective global policy framework. But these efforts are again hindered by the issue of sovereignty. International relations are governed by absolute state sovereignty which evolved out of Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and deems it so that affairs within a sovereign realm are inviolable by foreign actors (Heinrich, 2010).

The cause of reform, which animates the campaign for a parliamentary assembly and other reforms is also driven by efforts to give the individual a standing within an arena which is currently the level of only states. Currently, the United Nations can best be considered a “society of states” rather than an institution that serves the interests of individuals at the global level (Strauss, 2007).

Discourse on Current Deficiencies

There are several problems which the introduction of a parliamentary assembly to the UNGA may address. But first, it is important to define these problems and attempt to measure their

scope. In short, these problems are a deficit of democracy in international organizations and policy disjuncture between actors on the national and international stage. These two problems represent a threat to efforts to make credible, legitimate policy-making at the global level. This democratic deficit is described as follows— this definition is provided verbatim from a selection in the current literature for emphasis— “the lack of democratic control over existing intergovernmental and supranational governance structures such as the International Monetary Fund...” (Goodhart, 2008).

This democratic deficit problem is also described as a prolonging of the “legitimacy chain” used to analyze the legitimacy of executive decision-making. When viewed in this context, popular sovereignty is connected in a mostly unbroken fashion, to a larger concept of human or planetary sovereignty on a scale commensurate with the weight of contemporary problems in an ideal sense. This connection would result in highly legitimate decision-making therefore improving the likelihood of enforcement (Krajewski, 2008).

Further, as a matter of fairness, it is mentioned that the current configuration of international institutions fails to uphold modern standards of fairness and democracy. The contemporary world order is dominated by a few citizens and states which yield considerable influence over global affairs (Strauss, 2007). This issue of fairness is an especially important issue as the panorama of international issues such as climate change will affect those that have the least resources and mechanism with which to cope. Those that control the most political capital in the current world order are those with a pre-existing wealth of resources to deal with these issues.

The second problem entails the scale of current major global issues which are increasingly transnational and the current set of institutional mechanisms that policy actors use to solve them, which are primarily national or regional. This disconnect between the levels of problems and the institutional disposition to solve them is known as a policy disjuncture. This disjuncture is a result of structural deficiencies within contemporary world politics and global governance itself. Absolute state sovereignty is the foundation of our present system of international cooperation and for the purposes of this project, it is important to note that it is the premise upon which the UNGA operates as well.

While globalization has presented an increasing challenge to the concept of absolute state sovereignty, in the form of new humanitarian conventions such as the Responsibility to Protect and new institutions such as the International Criminal Court, the UN system generally and the UNGA specifically remain bound to this concept in its unalloyed form. The result is an institution at the heart of the present world order which is unable to lead or influence the discourse and effects of major global policy endeavors. And when the organization does involve itself on major issues such as climate change and biodiversity or in the case of organizations such as the World Trade Organization or International Monetary Fund on world finance, it lacks a certain degree of accountability.

Cohen and Sabel (2006) describe accountability as “the process norms arising from the organization of interdependence and cooperation.” With the need for organization and the presence of interdependence and cooperation ever-increasing this definition succinctly and clearly illustrates the importance of accountability with respect to democratic institutions as it

describes the necessary points of reference for judging the efficacy of reform in alleviating the aforementioned democracy deficit and policy disjuncture. Ultimately, policy enactors will judge the success of this project on the extent to which the addition of a parliamentary assembly to the UNGA rectifies these problems.

The UN Reform Discussion

The debate on reform of the UN General Assembly as mentioned in the introductory chapter centers around either an evolutionary approach or a transformative approach. In a review of the literature several examples were found illustrating each approach. An overview of examples that describes the common elements of each approach is presented as a part of a review of the current themes present within the general debate on reform of the UNGA.

In a review of the transformative approach there were several examples presented in the available literature. One such proposal that highlights the common themes found within this approach suggests a deliberative global citizens' assembly (DGCA). As an alternative to other popularly elected global assembly proposals it is suggested that they could be issue-specific and/or advisory only while still giving a voice to ordinary citizens of the international community (Dryzek, Bachtiger and Milewicz, 2011). The authors present its potential as a 'global constitutional convention' and cite specific examples from India, China, Brazil, Canada and Australia.

The evolutionary approach to reform of the UN General Assembly is exemplified by proponents of a parliamentary assembly to the UNGA. This approach through a multilevel system of governance comprising democratic nation-states and democratic elements at the regional and international level, including parliamentary assemblies for international organizations is among the varied elements of cosmopolitan democracy (Archibugi, 2008). Pertaining to the germane example, a parliamentary assembly to the UNGA, it is then hoped that this UNPA would evolve in time to become a directly-elected World Parliament (Falk and Strauss, 2001). This would, in some respects, mirror the evolution of another parliamentary assembly as the European Economic Community's parliamentary assembly developed into the directly-elected European Parliament of the European Union over the course of approximately two and a half decades (Roche, 2003).

This DGCA proposal within the larger debate on transformative reform represents several advantages for this approach. First, the DGCA proposal is the only suggested initiative with a history of being effectively actualized as a successful problem-solving tool. Second, when viewed within the context of an important principle in international affairs, the principle of subsidiarity, it has an important point in its favor. The principle of subsidiarity has guided the growth of other transnational institutions such as the European Union and a DGCA, through its use of ordinary citizens rather than delegating responsibility to elected officials allows for problems to be addressed closest to their source. Finally, the success of the World Social Forum and its regional counterparts also indicates the increased near-term practicality in comparison to the more prevalent popularly elected global assembly (PEGA) proposals common within the debate among proponents of a transformative approach to reform.

The strengths of the DGCA proposal challenged the initial thesis that the UNPA may be the best alternative within an evolutionary approach. As outlined in the previous section, these inherent strengths lend credence to the proposition that a DGCA perhaps consisting of ordinary citizens from around the world may be a suitable path toward the same goal that a UNPA would endeavor toward. This is particularly true with respect to some formidable challenges in establishing a parliamentary assembly for the UNGA. These challenges are represented by the traditional hostility from the United States to any efforts that call for concessions of any formal power to international bodies and China's unwillingness to allow any democratic elections beyond the local level.

The United States and China are the two most powerful nations on the planet with a relationship akin to that of the United States and the United Kingdom just before World War II. In this sense, it is meant that in the course of a transfer of power between global hegemony the level of buy-in afforded by these two nations will be of outsized importance. The challenges represented by these two states leads to two important questions when evaluating the feasibility and desirability of a UNPA. First, can it be realistically assumed that an undemocratic state such as China will allow for a democratic evolution of the international order? Second, would the US which has been historically hostile to any diminution of its sovereignty allow for effective decision-making at the global level which is not within its complete control? A negative answer on both questions lends significant credence to the DGCA proposal.

Logistical Strategies

Logistical strategies for the creation of a parliamentary assembly or similar body to complement the UN General Assembly will have to consider specific details such as its composition, voting methods and funding. The first two issues are of critical importance as they are problematic for the effective operation of the UNGA currently so improvements on these factors will be decisive as to whether the suggested policy innovation is worthwhile.

For the addition of a parliamentary assembly to the UN General Assembly to remedy, in part or wholly, the democratic deficit in this institution it could be either limited to parliamentarians representing democratic states or provide a two-tiered membership with observer status or alternate form of membership for states that have not yet democratized or allowed for popular sovereignty to be practiced. Through such membership categorization the parliamentary assembly would be both a vehicle for global institutional democratization and a structural proponent of democratization at the national level (Cohen and Sabel, 2006).

The one-state, one-vote scheme of voting in the UN General Assembly is one which appeals to a common perception of fairness in representation but it fails to reflect the reality of global power dynamics in politics, finance, military might and contributions to the success of the current world order (ex: Official Developmental Assistance and UN contributions, etc.). A parliamentary assembly, in order to represent an improvement on the UNGA, would need to have a revised method of deliberation and voting which better reflects current realities and is able to evolve to reflect the changing landscape of world power. One example found in current literature is weighted voting. In one of the most discussed proposals called the "binding triad" there would be three factors which would determine voting procedures in the UNGA or parliamentary assembly: a two-thirds majority would be needed to approve decisions under a one-state, one-vote method,

operating within a voting context which assigns votes as a percentage of world population a simple majority is needed for approval and a simple majority would also be the basis for votes based on voting proportions that consider contributions to the UN budget (Szasz, 2007).

Summary

Current literature, particularly on the terms ‘global democracy’ and ‘UN parliamentary assembly’, provided a succinct overview of the current debate on reform specifically of the UN General Assembly with an emphasis on the two approaches: transformative and evolutionary. The primary difference is one of speed while both streams of debate seem to arrive at the need for significant changes to the current makeup of the UNGA.

The democratic deficit in addition to policy disjuncture and a lack of accountability are three important problems where the literature provides information that clearly defined these specific problems. In addition to the identification and definition of problems there was an abundance of information within current literature on two major proposals that would guide preparations for the implementation of a parliamentary assembly at the United Nations, namely, the popularly elected global assembly (PEGA) and the deliberative citizens’ assembly (DGCA).

Literature Map

A literature map (Appendix 1) is included in order to provide some information on the point at which review of the current literature started, it also provides an outline of the course in which the research design might follow. The map is a useful addition since it highlights modifications to the project due to reviews of secondary literature and the addition of potential investigation of other potential policy innovations.

Chapter Three-Primary Research Design

Introduction

In Chapter Three, the structure upon which the research design is based will be elaborated, stakeholders will be identified and an analysis of the design will be conducted. The research design is intended to offer a successful route for policy-enactors to follow in order to evaluate and implement the suggested policy innovation, in this case, the addition of a parliamentary assembly to the UN General Assembly, but also with a cursory review of additional options as mentioned in Chapter Two.

The research design will include efforts to maintain the confidentiality of contributors whose participation may make them vulnerable to professional or social repercussions and to comply with a stringent set of ethical concerns in order to protect the integrity of the project and respect the participants themselves. Most data that will be collected and analyzed during this phase will be of a qualitative nature and will consist of surveys and interviews as well as a review of best practices among parliamentary assemblies in other international organizations.

Stakeholders

For the purposes of this project, the term “stakeholder” covers those that are potentially affected by the proposal should it be implemented. The term also covers those that will be essential to its implementation. This could lead to an expansive set of stakeholders as will be presented as the United Nations and potential changes to its system, particularly those dedicated to its democratization. This section will review the project stakeholders and attempt to measure the scope of any potential implementation and the extent to which their participation may shape such analysis and implementation.

Stakeholders are initially categorized based on the level of involvement required during the analysis phase of the suggested policy innovation. In this stage, current members of the United Nations’ administrative secretariat, the UN General Assembly and past eminent officials with a history of involvement in past commissions and panels such as the Commission on Global Governance (CGG), the Commission on Globalization (COG) and the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Solutions (HLPTCS) with some involvement by activists and interested lay-persons. Stakeholders are then categorized based on the level of involvement that may be required should the commission or panel recommend that efforts be made to implement the suggested policy innovation. The preceding list of stakeholders and their levels of involvement will be reviewed during data collection and analysis and a later potential stage involving implementation will be described.

Eminent Officials

Esteemed national leaders such as Mary Robinson (Ireland), Helen Clark (New Zealand), Antonio Guterres (Portugal), and Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) have continued in leadership at the global level serving as High Commissioner of Human Rights, president of the World Bank and chief administrator of the UN Development Program (UNDP), as examples. This experience with problems at both the national and international level is an invaluable resource to be tapped by the United Nations as it furthers debate over institutional reform. This experience also affords these individuals a great amount of influence on the portfolios they managed. It is suggested at

the commencement of research into this proposal by the United Nations that the Secretary-General or General Assembly form a group of experts such as those listed above with such experience to serve as leaders in what may be called a Commission on Institutional Reform.

Current UN Secretariat

The Secretariat of the United Nations under the leadership of the Secretary-General is the primary administrative organ within the UN system. Consisting of more than 44,000 officials spanning the globe the effects of its activities can be felt in every agency or department within the UN system itself making it a critical aspect of the UN's day-to-day operations. This large and expansive bureaucracy will most likely have an intimate role in both assisting the Joint Inspection Unit with the analysis of the policy innovation and also the implementation of it. The Joint Inspection Unit will also conduct interviews with members of the Secretariat as a part of the first investigative stage. This will be true, particularly, of those members of the Secretariat with current or past experience working with the permanent representatives, assorted advisory bodies and organizations with consultative status at the UN connected with the General Assembly.

UN General Assembly

As the focus of this project, employees of the General Assembly—even interpreters, national permanent representatives will be important components of the two-stage research process. They are also the first and most immediate of the stakeholder groups to be impacted by this policy innovation. The Joint Inspection Unit will, during the investigative phase, conduct interviews, surveys and even polls of diplomats in order to gain information vital to the research process. Due to this policy innovation being focused on remedying a democracy deficit, inspectors will categorize participants from the UNGA based on the style of governance of the nation they represent. This will assist the Commission with its preparations for a structural design of a parliamentary assembly able to accommodate representatives of varying states.

The Global Community

This is where, within the group of stakeholders, it gets expansive. Because the United Nations is an organization with offices on every inhabited continent, a bureaucracy consisting of tens of thousands of officers and a nearly universal membership any considerations to reform it, particularly with a goal of democratization and accountability, must take into account the entire global community consisting of all humanity. Ultimately, this stakeholder group is the most important as it is the group served by and the group the United Nations, in its idealistic Charter, was founded to serve. The global issues that reform would better equip the UN to help remedy are the issues that the most vulnerable within the global community have a direct interest in solving such as climate change, terrorism, fair global trade and economics, access to education, healthcare, sanitation and public services, and the control of infectious diseases to name but a few present during this century. The Commission will, through regional public consultations during the investigative phase, seek the advice and feedback of concerned citizens. These consultations are not simply for information-gathering by the Commission but are also a way to actively involve the public, gauge and possibly raise interest and contribute to the sense that democratization of the United Nations is a collaborative endeavor.

Global Democracy Activists & Laypersons

Activists and interested laypersons are an important component as far as further defining the problem through the sharing the product of their individual activism with the Commission during the investigative phase. They are also, like all other segments of the stakeholders, a subset of the Global Community stakeholder group. Moreover, through their interest in global policy and the mechanism through which it is drafted and implemented, are an ideal first group to help with the exploration of this issue and the suggested innovation. Like the general public, they will be consulted by the Commission during regional consultations.

Implications of Project

The research conducted for this project proposal illustrated a growing awareness of the structural problems inherent within the predominant models of global governance generally and specifically with the UN General Assembly. While cost would not be a prohibitive factor there are significant challenges to efforts to generate the necessary political will among policy elites with the power to implement such reforms and to educate the general public in order to generate upward pressure on such elites in order to commit to such action and lessen any potential downtrend backlash over perceptions of lessened national sovereignty or prestige.

Primary research will be conducted by a commission or panel of experts, which it is suggested, should be called the Commission on Institutional Reform (CIR). This commission would be conducted in a manner similar to the methods used by past commissions empaneled by the Secretary-General or General Assembly. In the investigative stage there will be significant involvement of the UN's only independent investigative body on efficiency and other internal matters, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). In this phase of the research design, the CIR will focus on a review of best practices in parliamentary assemblies of other regional and international and through surveys, interviews and some public consultations develop a framework through which the parliamentary assembly or a similar organization can be created and in its initial years evaluated. Specific research tactics such as surveys and interviews will also be governed by the New England College policy as it pertains to research involving other individuals (NEC, 2003).

Project Limitations

There are some important limitations associated with the project that will need to be considered as the research design is implemented. The first concerns membership of the Commission on Institutional Reform and the ability of the Joint Inspection Unit to effectively fulfill the requirements demanded in the plan. Members of the commission will be eminent officials, global democracy theorists and former statesmen with schedules and other responsibilities that may not always accommodate an uninterrupted long-term period of involvement. To allow for a continuous and steady flowing research process those that have a limited ability to be involved but would be high-value participants may have alternates who would assist in their absence. A second limitation was mentioned in the project introduction and it concerns the unique position of the United Nations in international politics and policy. The UN's universality and its central importance for current and future policy limit the research design and subsequent implementation to be replicable in similar situations for other regional and international organizations.

The Investigative Phase

The history of commissions and expert panels as effective contributions to policy-making and discourse at the international level is, particularly since the end of the Cold War, significant. The 1995 Commission on Global Governance, the 2004 High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and the current Commission on Globalization were all important examples that were used in constructing the design of the suggested Commission on Institutional Reform.

Figure 100

Figure 1 The UN's Joint Inspection Unit was founded by a 1966 General Assembly Resolution (2150-XXI) and under its directives it is intended to serve as an independent source of review through inspections and evaluations which help improve management, coordination and efficiency within the United Nations System (JIU, 2004). This group is perfectly suited toward the internal review and preparations for this policy innovation which could introduce additional complexity to a world-spanning organization.

In this first investigative phase, the Commission and the JIU will conduct external and internal reviews, respectively. The internal review by the JIU will be similar in form to most other investigations conducted by the unit and therefore should not require no additional burdening of the inspectors. Further, the research (primarily interviews and reviews of operational protocols for the relevant affected agencies) will be conducted within the already established parameters that guide the JIU toward ethical, efficient and independent reviews. Interviews and reviews will be based on an inquiry into certain categories deemed important to a determination on the ability of the policy innovation (parliamentary assembly) to rectify the identified problems. These categories will include: administrative costs, logistical impact (changes to the role, responsibilities and fundamental mandate of the General Assembly), and baseline normative measurements on the institution's current capabilities. Most of this information gathered by the JIU will be of a qualitative nature and will be reviewed by a Commission in Phase Two.

The Analysis Phase

In the second phase, the Commission comes into the fore and will analyze the information collected and publish its recommendations. The Commission will be analyzing its own information on the two areas that were its focus: best practices and operational plans. It will also analyze the information from the Joint Inspection Unit which would include reviews of the current operations and capabilities of the General Assembly and an overview of the potential effects of specific reforms. During the analysis phase the Commission will combine these external and internal review elements into a list of recommendations and an outline of some possible paths toward creating a parliamentary assembly.

Summary

Secondary research has, to some extent, unveiled the democratic deficiencies of the UN General Assembly. These deficiencies impede the ability of the General Assembly specifically to participate in efforts to guide the course of global policy-making. Further, the current makeup and general form of the General Assembly make it a poor candidate to act as a vehicle in addressing the disconnect between national policy-making institutions and those at the global level.

The result is the current inadequate and ad-hoc approach to contemporary issues on the international stage. The design for primary research will give eminent officials and proponents of UN reform a more detailed picture of the problems inherent in the current structure of the General Assembly. These deficiencies and policy disjuncture will be illustrated in the investigative phase and then during the analysis phase will come the part of the process where the Commission on Institutional Reform with internal data provided by the Joint Inspection Unit will develop a report to include a structurally and politically viable path toward the implementation of the proposed policy innovation.

Chapter Four-Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Initial research indicates that there is indeed a deficit with respect to the level of democratic character of international organizations. It is expected that further research to be conducted by the Commission on Institutional Reform and the Joint Inspection Unit will confirm this deficit as well other conclusions that are the premise upon which this project rests. The unanswered question concerns the proposed policy innovation, a parliamentary assembly. Further research as outlined in Chapter Three is designed to investigate the ability of the innovation to remedy identified problems. Finally, it is important to remember that there is little basis to conclude objectively that the United Nations system, despite the idealistic expressions found in its Charter does not fit within the conclusions of that initial research.

The United Nations General Assembly is an organization that is emblematic of the systematic restraints hindering the United Nations as a whole from serving as an effective, transparent and therefore credible authority for policy-making at the global level. The central problems with respect to the UNGA relate to the democratic deficit, policy disjuncture and a lack of accountability. All of these problems are related and solving each one requires a holistic approach to reform that addresses all of them comprehensively.

Current debate on reform specifically of the UN General Assembly focuses on the pace of reform as the question as to need is one in which there is wide agreement. The initial research indicates that the urgency of the need for reform calls for a transformative approach in which there are radical changes to the General Assembly. And recent failures to address problems of global import such as climate change, global finance and trade with respect to the ongoing economic downturn only highlight further the need for an effective structure of policy-making at the international level.

But the causes that emphasize the need for a transformation are also what will limit it in any examination of the halted history of UN reform. Proposed changes are too often victim to the tortured realities of geopolitics where the needs and interests of a nation or collection of nations take precedence over the needs of the species and the planet. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account these political realities which inhibit the pace of reform in order to allow for some incremental approach. This is the suggestion of those that propose an evolutionary approach with a parliamentary assembly being the first step in a sequential process of democratization. Initial research leads to a conclusion that this is indeed the best route despite the need for a transformation as the difference is merely one of pacing. Further, the slower pacing of changes that an evolutionary approach allows overcomes non-ideal geopolitical realities while still achieving an eventual level of reform on par with the transformative approach.

Success Criteria/Evaluation

The success of this project's suggested policy innovation will depend on the degree to which it lessens the impact of the identified problems. How well does a parliamentary assembly allow for a more accountable and responsive institution? Does it help alleviate the democratic deficit and policy disjuncture currently found with the General Assembly operating alone? The specific criteria will be based on these two important questions and a review of the institution's

operations over the course of its first year. This critical aspect of the later research process will need to be conducted by an in-house investigative unit.

The same entities that were involved in the primary investigation of the proposed parliamentary assembly will also be involved in measuring its success in remedying the identified problems as well evaluating the organization after its inception. The Commission on Institutional Reform will evaluate its success due to the fact that many of its proposed members would have experience administering agencies and departments in the UN system or with leading national constituencies that are affected by the very same issues. Due to the Joint Inspection Unit's expertise with evaluations of the United Nations' internal operations it will be best suited to conduct future reviews of the new parliamentary assembly should it be established. The JIU is tasked with presenting an annual report on the efficiency of the UN's operations and it may be most appropriate for the JIU to take the first year of operations of the parliamentary assembly as a period of evaluation concerning its ability to complement the General Assembly.

General Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on initial research and a preliminary review of a similar example in the form of the European parliament's evolution as well as a general idea of the outcome of the two investigative phases to be conducted by the Commission on Institutional Review and the Joint Inspection Unit, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

Conclusion One-Democratization

There is a dearth of democratic elements with respect to the United Nations General Assembly. This reduces the legitimacy and credibility of its activities and involvement in collaborative efforts to address major contemporary economic, social and political challenges. Efforts to improve the effectiveness of the UNGA will need to create or further empower the democratic elements of the UNGA.

Recommendation One

As a component of the investigative phase it is imperative that research on feasibility be directed toward designing a parliamentary assembly or other supplemental body that is a vehicle for the institutionalization of democracy at the global level. This includes the body's composition and voting procedures.

Conclusion Two-Addressing Policy Disjuncture

There is the problem of the disconnect between national and international policy-making. The creation of a new and more democratic institution at the global level may allow for transnational issues to be more effectively addressed particularly as the institution evolves based on its early performance as an advisory body.

Recommendation Two

Should it be decided to implement this project's proposal it is important that there be some early discussion and eventual planning for the parliamentary assembly to evolve with greater responsibilities based on the Joint Inspection Unit's evaluations. The parliamentary assembly should be seen not as a reform landmark set in stone but as a tool for the UN General Assembly to better meet the demands of the modern world.

Conclusion Three-Accountability

Like the first two problems, the lack of instruments of accountability at the UN General Assembly hinder the ability of the body to participate in the promulgation of effective global policy. Even if the UNGA in its current form were empowered to make binding decisions the lack of such instruments would seriously diminish the credibility of such decisions and therefore decrease the likelihood that they would be implemented at subordinate levels.

Recommendation Three

During the implementation phase of the policy innovation there must be consideration given to efforts to ensure that the parliamentary assembly is a vehicle for the realization of national constituencies' right to self-determination. This may mean representatives chosen by non-democratic regimes could have a diminished level of involvement or it could mean an assembly composed of only members appointed or directly elected by free citizenries. This recommendation would most likely be addressed in the analysis phase of the investigation process as the Commission on Institutional Reform.

Summary

The feverish level of debate on UN reform is indicative of its necessity and of the world organization's efforts to address problems of unprecedented importance in all of human history. A global system that is more interdependent, complex and sensitive to political, economic and social shocks from any one nation can't continue with the present ad-hoc and piecemeal approach to problem-solving that is the current modus operandi of international policy-making. In short, there is an urgent need for continued reform of national sovereignty so that the interests of the state give way to an idea of human sovereignty. As examples, climate change and access to basic conditions that make a high standard of living possible such as water, healthcare, sanitation, education and food security are not issues of importance to just the global North or South but of all humanity. It is time that we begin the process of constructing an architecture of governance that is up to these challenges and that acts with the authority of all humanity, for all humanity.

Annotated Bibliography

Abhay, K. "The common man's voice," Times of India, December 14, 2011, Accessed February 3, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-14/edit-page/30512336_1_unpa-unga-new-media

K. Abhay, a foreign affairs writer for the Times of India, covers the growing movement for a UN Parliamentary Assembly in this December 2011 article. Abhay provides an incisive argument on the potential for a UNPA to help 'facilitate policy on global matters' and make the UN General Assembly more democratic and representative and therefore more legitimate.

Allmand, Warren. "Global problems call for better global governance, starting with the United Nations." Straight.com, June 23, 2009, Accessed February 10, 2012, <http://www.straight.com/article-236444/warren-allmand-global-problems-call-better-global-governance-starting-united-nations>

Warren Allmand is a columnist for Straight.com, a Vancouver-area paper. Allmand's column on better global governance cites recent quotes from world leaders such as US President Barack Obama and former UK PM Gordon Brown to ground his critique of international affairs. This critique included criticism of the G20 and international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank for their lack of democratic oversight and accountability. Allmand also cites a useful route for the creation of a UNPA by utilizing Article 22 of the UN Charter.

Andersson, Emma Stina. "World Parliament-Fact or Fiction: On the feasibility of world parliamentary models." Master's thesis, University of Helsinki, 2011. In Ms. Andersson's Master's thesis she gives a thorough analysis of some potential models for what is envisioned as a later development of a UN Parliamentary Assembly, a World Parliament. This analysis of models includes a review of theoretical frameworks, case models and the feasibility and potential desirability of each model. Andersson's models provide some framework with which to work in order to evaluate the logistical routes toward establishing a UN Parliamentary Assembly and predict potential lines of institutional evolution.

Archibugi, Daniele. *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)

The Italian political theorist, Daniele Archibugi, presents an examination of cosmopolitan democracy and the feasibility of democracy at the global level. His analysis of some necessary reforms of current international institutions in order to move closer to having democratic institutions at the global level provides some empirical flesh to the prevailing conventional wisdom of a democratic deficit with respect to global institutions.

Brummel, Andreas. "A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly Could Drive Global Innovation."

Policy Innovations, July 28, 2008, Accessed February 9, 2012, <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/innovations/data/000065>

This is a policy briefing from Andreas Brummel and has an identification of one possibly important reason for the perceived problems with global governance, presently. Brummel describes the current pursuit of short-term national interests leading to lowest common

denominator policy applications as a product of secretive, unaccountable and disconnected negotiations—a hallmark of international diplomacy.

Dryzek, John S., Andre Bachtiger and Karolina Milewicz. “Towards a Deliberative Global Citizen’s Assembly.” *Global Policy* 2:1 (2011): 33-42

Citing a widespread recognition of a democratic deficit with respect to global governance, the authors of this article in the journal *Global Policy* call for the exploration of alternative bodies to supplement the current deliberative structure of relevant international institutions, particularly, the UN General Assembly. The primary model for a global deliberative assembly critiqued is that suggested by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss (2001).

Falk, Richard and Andrew Strauss. “Toward Global Parliament.” *Foreign Affairs* 80:1 (2001): 212-220

This article in a 2001 edition of *Foreign Affairs* is considered a landmark illustration of current thinking on global governance reform. The article presents a model called the “Popularly Elected Global Assembly” as a supplement or replacement to the UN General Assembly as a way of making the United Nations more democratic. It has generated considerable debate among cosmopolitan democracy theorists—as an example, the previous notation—and provides a useful framework for analyzing UNPA models.

Heinrich, Dieter. “Extension of Democracy to the Global Level.” *A Reader on Second Assembly & Parliamentary Proposals*; Edited by Saul Mendlovitz & Barbara Walker. Center for UN Reform Education. May 2003. 68:73

Heinrich has been an activist for global governance reform for over 20 years. Heinrich’s focus is both theoretical and practical. His theoretical and practical analysis identify that the estrangement of individual citizens from global politics has led to an absence of a sense of global civic responsibility. It is his conclusion that this lack of responsibility for attention to global issues retards progress towards the development of effective international institutes because there is a subsequent lessening of upward pressure from civilians and civil society.

Krajewski, Markus. “Democratic Governance as an Emerging Principle of International Economic Law.” Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of International Law, Geneva, Switzerland, July 15-17 2008

Krajewski’s conference presentation focuses more on economics and international law but trade and finance have taken such an important role in issues of global governance and the broad thrust of his arguments could apply to reform generally.

Tellus Institute-Great Transitions Initiative. “We the People of Earth: Toward Global Democracy.” Last modified May 2010. <http://www.gtinitiative.org/>

This paper is a part of the Tellus Institute’s Great Transitions Initiative which is dedicated toward presenting some potential paths during a period that the Tellus Institute believes is in transition from a Westphalian state-centric system to a more globalized post-national regime. The Institute’s emphasis on global citizenship caused me to identify this source as useful as it is a central component of my thesis.

Roche, Douglas. "The Case for a UN Parliamentary Assembly." A Reader on Second Assembly & Parliamentary Proposals; Edited by Saul Mendlovitz & Barbara Walker. Center for UN Reform Education. May 2003. 30:53

Canadian Douglas Roche is a diplomat and parliamentarian and formerly an official with Parliamentarians for Global Action. Roche's main focus is a background on the history and current status of the campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly. Roche's article is a good review of what connects the need for global authorities with unassailable legitimacy to address global issues which transcend national boundaries.

Szasz, Paul C. "Alternative Voting Systems In International Organizations And The Binding Triad Proposal To Improve In General Assembly Decision-Taking." May 2001. Reprint. Center for War/Peace Studies, August 2007

Mr. Szasz, a former UN administrator and international law professor, outlines a potential mechanism for voting in either a reformed UN General Assembly or a supplemental institution called the Binding Triad. It is seen as a reform of the one-state, one-vote rule which may not account for the modern realities of international politics.

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

Weiss and Thakur examine the relationship of the UN to five identified areas through studies in these areas concerning knowledge, compliance, institutions, policy and normative issues. Their examination of these relationships is important in order to make the connection between the need for UN reform and the potential application of this reform in improving the ability of the UN to effect policy on issues such as climate change, terrorism and global economic shocks.

Mahbubani, Kishore. "Can Asia re-legitimize global governance?" Review of International Political Economy 18:1 (2011): 131-139

Kishore Mahbubani is a professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. While Mahbubani does focus on the role of Asian states for the potential in 're-legitimizing' global governance, it also is a clear exposition of some of the challenges facing the current structure of global governance.

Reuda-Sabater, et al. "A Fresh Look at Global Governance: Exploring Objective Criteria for Representation." Center for Global Development. February 2009. 1:24

While the authors of this article focus their analysis on representation models for the G20 and Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), specifically, their analysis also has broad consideration of factors that could be applied to other institutions as well. The criteria that they outline provide some useful framework for evaluating the potential logistics of a UNPA's establishment.

Appendix 1-Literature Map

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Discourse on Deficiencies

Historical Context

The UN Reform Conundrum, Rivlin (2006)00

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