



John Tessitore, Susan Woolfson, eds. *A Global Agenda: Issues before the 54th Assembly of the United Nations*. Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999. x + 330 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8476-9831-8.



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What is the global agenda? It depends on where you live, who you are and what are you interested in. The United Nations Association of the United States presents in this book, as every year, the main issues discussed during 1999 giving us the UN general concerns, as well as what has been done through the institutional scope and international law. Under the coordination of John Tessitore and Susan Woolfson, readers have contributions from different authors (some well known) which analyze peace, arms, trade, resources, humanitarian, legal and financial issues regarding the UN agenda.

MAKING AND KEEPING THE PEACE

After the Cold War and under multilateralism, conflicts and worldwide problems have changed. Peace and security bases and threats have changed from intra-state tensions to inter-state. Nationalism has created civil confrontations, creating intra-nations conflicts (nevertheless they exist from a long time ago, they did not have the required attention). In its first part, the book analyzes and evaluates what UN has recently done in bringing peace to certain countries. Critic of the UN intervention missions (Disunited Nations), Nick Birnback distinguishes self-interests, unilateral strategies, exclusion in participation of some members, “subcontracts” of regional forces, and enormous investments. Rather than success, the Security

Council confronts continuing conflicts, premature close down of missions, unwillingness to commit, and facts in contradiction with the UN Charter. Cases like Croatia, East Timor, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, landmines, and International Criminal Court, demonstrate clearly the suprastructure engagement problems. A regional review is given by Birnback to conflicts, violence, elections, health and refugees in Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, some Commonwealth Independent States and Cyprus. Security concerns by the Security Council and General Assembly, abilities and mistakes in objectives and mission’s strategies, are extraordinarily analyzed and documented. The different stages of Cambodia’s problems and UN participation in recent national elections are scrutinized by Frederick Brown. More complicated conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans are questioned by Gordon Goldstein. Despite the dimension of these disputes, the external involvement and different interpretations, Goldstein presents an excellent resume of these two endless like conflicts.

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

The permanent concern of pacifist and warriors involving arms producers, consumers, states, civilians, NGOs and the United Nations. Derek Boothby discusses chemical, biological, nuclear, anti-ballistic missiles, land

mines, arms and fissile materials control advances and obstacles encountered by the General Assembly, the UN Special Commission and specific countries' works in the disarmament field. Regardless of the high advances from the 53th Session of the General Assembly, several subject matters are still not settled. This is one of the strongest points examined by Boothby.

DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Differentiating social and economic development, Roger A. Coate reviews the UN work in the field, highly related to peace and security concerns. After the decolonization of Asia and Africa, development is (probably with disarmament) one of the oldest issues discussed in the General Assembly. Non Alignment, North-South Summits, G77 and other different teams have spend thousands of hours and papers in searching for a "fair formula" while bilateral clientelism is practiced. Up to date statistics and special events are listed by Coate, as well as detailed explanations of "human security", "sustainable human development" and the link between development and society/governance/cooperation. Advances in the World Trade Organization are explored by David Lynch as he examines leaderless problems to China's membership, USA versus EU trade confrontations. Steel, environment and regional concerns are also detailed.

GLOBAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

More focused on the environment, Gail V. Karlson explores the relation between trade and sustainable development. Labor, biological diversity, chemicals, climate, ozono, forests, desertification, foreign debt and financial aid are related with the work of WTO, UN Commission of Sustainable Development, FAO, WB/IMF, and other working institutions and groups. Peggy Polk rescues the Malthus' controversy regarding population and food efforts made by UN conferences and FAO. Lee A Kimball covers the rest in an extraordinary way: seas, oceans and Antarctica conventions are increasingly important given the climate change, lack of potable water, food potential and conservation alarm. In this sense, UN General Assembly is concentrating high efforts in regulatory conventions and jurisdiction

SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Social, humanitarian and cultural rights are the liveliest issues in the UN agenda. In 1998, fifty years after the UN Declaration on Human Rights, genocide, torture, crimes against humanity and "war" (in words of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. p. 155) are still tragic

violations. While civil and political, economic and social, racial discrimination and women discrimination, torture and the rights of the child are defined as the six major in international regulations, Felice D. Gaer explores UN commitment (and different NGOs, specially International Amnesty) with specific country cases (Kosovo, China, Sierra Leone, Iran, Cuba. Israel, Somalia and Iraq). This extensive chapter includes advances in the gender integration, democracy and racism field. Crime and drugs, terrorism, people trafficking and money laundering in the market and communications context, are analyzed by Fiona Shukri. The UN health preoccupations though WHO strategy, as well as children and general youth problems (education and health), are excellently detailed by Daniel G. Butenschon. New demographic alarms (older persons) by Susana U. Calzada and disabled persons by Nina S. Hayes and Elizabeth A. Lynch are also reviewed.

LEGAL ISSUES

Advances in international law, specifically armed interventions, the International Criminal Court, ad hoc war crimes tribunals (Yugoslavia and Rwanda) structures and functions, in parallel with the role of the International Law Commission are broadly covered by Mark A. Drumbl. His analysis includes the jurisdictional prospective of the Cambodia genocide and analyzes the Augusto Pinochet case. This work could not be complete without reviewing the last international legal steps: the International Court of Justice and terrorism fighting.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Whenever contributions to UN are discussed, it is like opening Pandora's box. Anthony Mango explores the real willing of states in strengthening the suprastructure's institutions. From 1998 up to 2001, the UN budget problems have forced a restructuring of the institution (agenda, staff and organization chart), raising tension not only regarding different points of view, but interests. The last peacekeeping missions financial costs are also listed and commented on. Recently US financial participation percentage has been reduced and perhaps also the influence of the US.

While general threats to international security and the meaning of peace are not specified (in UN sense), only regarding specific cases, the work done by the United Nations Association of the United States of America is very helpful in accessing current reliable information about the different topics for internationalist studies. A very useful book if you are willing to have more information

about certain up to date conflicts and worldwide concerns, specially because the authors quote not only UN documents, but several (American) newspapers and webpages. The weak part of the book may be that some authors have a very "American" (or developed) point of view of international and UN agenda. Women integration or racism are less important than hunger in some countries; the economic model "recommended" by WB/IMF is polarizing incomes; the pollution problem has a different impact between developed and developing countries; and end to nuclear weapons and some other high technology arms is not possible because the lack of

will and the plethora of interests of some countries; Indian and Pakistan nuclear tests are not less dangerous than the nuclear weapons of Israel, UK and the US. Anyhow, this is a highly recommended text and a strong effort in strengthening internationalism, recognizing the efforts of a suprastructural organization, and helping the Sisyphus efforts to make the world hominis paribus.

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