

**International Conference**  
**„A greater world: The future elites in a common Europe“**

**“Transborder Cooperation and the role of the  
UN system and human rights”**

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**The nature of international cooperation**

Most international relations are traditionally – and continue to be even in the time of globalization - of bilateral nature. The multilateral cooperation is a product of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it started with scientific cooperation on various fields.

Intergovernmental multilateral cooperation started essentially as a worldwide peace-making framework after the two World Wars, i.e. the League of Nations after WWI and the United Nations after WW II.

Numerous intergovernmental organizations both of a world scale and of an inter-regional or regional scale have been created in order to meet the special requirements for a transborder cooperation for all countries of the world or of a group of countries.

Germany for example is member of more than 200 intergovernmental organizations. Appr. 10% of the Federal budget is spent annually for the membership fees, i.e. in total some 50 Bill. DM.

The international system is being permanently scrutinized and tested in order to see to it that it remains effective and that is indeed continue to respond to the needs of its member states.

In 1995, 50 years after the establishment of the United Nations, the ‘Commission on Global Governance’ has published its report “*Our global Neighborhood*”. The report analyses the changing political situation of the world after the breakdown of the ‘Iron Curtain’, as Winston Churchill has called it in his famous speech in Zurich, which separated the world into three major groups: (I) The first world, i.e. in essence the countries with a developed market economy grouped in the OECD (II) the so-called socialist countries, which were grouped in the COMECON and (III), the developing countries, i.e. the so-called “Third World”.

The dominant major place in this report was attributed to the United Nations system and to the worldwide binding international law. These are also the two dimension of this short presentation.

Exactly five years after the publication of the report of the “Commission on Global Governance”, i.e. on 2 and 3. May 2000, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has invited 13 Heads of States and Government to Berlin in order to exchange views on “*Progressive Governance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*”.

At the Berlin meeting there was word about “International institutions” dedicated to many of the key issues of the world agenda: *Trade, financial stability, conflict prevention, public health, education, labor, environmental protection, economic development*. The name of the United Nations was nowhere explicitly mentioned. All what the Press Communiqué of the Berlin meeting in this context had say, is: “*We should particularly enhance those institutions which focus on fighting hunger, poverty, social exclusion and environmental degradation*”.

Has the United Nations system lost out?

In order to understand a certain widespread dissatisfaction with the UN and with multilateral cooperation in general, it is useful that we recall the genesis of the UN system:

The UN legal-institutional machinery was worked out at the 'Conference on International Organizations' at San Francisco in 1945. It reflected to a large extent the basic interests of the two WW II superpowers, i.e. the US and the Soviet Union. The UN Charter, as devised in San Francisco, created in Article 3 a category of automatic "founding" membership for state parties to the wartime alliance, insofar as these were the only states invited to participate in the preparatory founding conference in San Francisco.

Globalization and the international system p 7

"Globalization is the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies with the consequence that events in one part of the world have effects on peoples and societies far away."

- The processes of globalization have been uneven, and most of the poor countries are now effectively left out of the global political economy, whilst in the Triad regions the process has quickened and deepened – this has created a new and different structure of international politics.
- Vast increases in global capital flows have produced a "symbol" economy separated from the "real" economy, and again, this has largely bypassed the poorest countries.
- International production has become the most dynamic aspect of world production and trade and has changed the structure of international political economy.
- "Domestic" economy is now "international" – almost impossible to think of a "domestic" economic activity that is not, in some way, "international".
- "Neoliberalism" provides the ideological basis for globalization and has become the unquestioned "common sense" of the world economy"  
(Roger Tooze, International Political Economy, in: John Baylis and Steve Smith, The Globalisation of World Politics, Oxford 1998)

The End of Sovereignty p. 21

International Treaties reduce gradually the influence of national constituents (Governments and national parliaments, private sector, national lobby groups). The loss of sovereignty is particularly felt by the ongoing process of reforming the European Union. The recent discussion on this issue – labeled "The Finality of the EU" - introduced by the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer to whom last week in "Le Monde" the French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine has responded, exemplifies the matter. In the center of the issue is the word "Subsidiary", i.e. how much sovereignty has to be transferred from the EU member states to the European Union in order to find an optimum for the fulfillment of the goals of the EU. "How much is too much?"

## **Evolution of the UN system in response to changing global priorities**

CHART

**Funding of UN system**

**SIZE of UN system**

## **Philosophy and law of the UN system**

### **The evolution of intergovernmental cooperation outside the UN system**

Whereas the fathers of the United Nations may have thought that all worldwide concerns of countries as well as the particular concerns of a regional cooperation may be dealt with through the United Nations system or the family of United Nations agencies, as it is sometimes referred to, it became soon clear, that many issues had to be dealt with outside the UN system. Each region of the world has therefore developed in addition to the regional UN Commissions (ECE; ECA; ECLA; ESCAP, ESCWA) their own regional organization (Council of Europe, OAU, OAS, ASEAN)

### **The importance of the organized international civil society (NGO's)**

#### **Action parameters for transborder cooperation of the UN system**

- **Resolutions**
- **Treaties**
- **Plans of Action**
- **World Conferences**
- **World Commission Reports**
- **Days, Weeks and years of observance**

**As this list puts in evidence, the nature of these various instruments varies considerably. Whereas the developing countries regard the UN General Assembly as a sort of "Parliament of Mankind", the industrialized Western countries (in harmony with the former socialist countries) are denying any parliamentary character to the General Assembly. Even the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly do thus not have a binding character.**

**Things have changed over the years. The Western powers – together with the then Western-leaning Central and Latin American countries - used to have an effective voting control over the General Assembly. After 1956 when the first wave of developing countries have joined the United Nations**