

The role of the United Nations in global governance

Margaryta Khvostova

Lviv Polytechnic National University, UKRAINE, Lviv,
S. Banderystreet 12, E-mail: ritaylor17@gmail.com

Abstract – This research looks at the current status and trends of global governance and the role of the United Nations in this process. The aim of the article is to analyze the possibility of the UN to act as a global government. It is analyzed the current condition of the UN agencies and their ability to make decisions about global challenges.

Key words – the United Nations, global governance, global challenges, international organizations, reforms.

I. Introduction

Globalization has become an essential feature in today's society, which requires active stabilizing and countervailing control mechanisms of complex world processes. Global changes over the past decade have resulted in a more interdependent and complex world than ever before. While the global policy has focused primarily on integration aspects, the effects of growing interdependence between countries were ignored, leading to the emergence of a systemic risk.

II. Global Governance and the United Nations System

The 2008-2009 financial crisis illustrates the failure of even sophisticated global institutions to manage the underlying forces of a systemic risk, and this is symptomatic of institutional failure to keep pace with globalization. The lessons from the financial crisis not only highlighted the real threat of a systemic risk, but more importantly, they exposed the profound shortcomings of global institutions in order to manage global systemic risks in the future. The fact that the most developed systems of global governance failed to detect and neutralize threats provoked by globalization highlights the scale and urgency of the problem.

Today's limited global governance system has led to creation of various informal groups, meetings and forms of the international community, which allowed time to take collective actions. These informal groups such as the G8 and the G20, as well as regional organizations, are gaining greater influence in global governance. They are seeking for integrated solutions. New members of international cooperation, which participate in global governance, challenge the preexisting role in traditional multilateral institutions, mainly the United Nations.

The United Nations coordinates activities between states on a global scale. It is the only inter-governmental organization with a truly universal membership (193 governments). In addition to the main organs and various humanitarian programs and commissions of the UN itself, there are about 20 functional organizations affiliated with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, and the International

Telecommunications Union. The other UN departments are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Militarily, the UN deploys peacekeeping forces, usually to build and maintain post-conflict peace and stability.

The United Nations plays four essential functions as an intellectual actor:

- managing knowledge,
- developing norms,
- promulgating recommendations,
- institutionalizing ideas.

Over sixty years the United Nations has played a central role in adoption of many global issues. Today the United Nations should position itself in new ways and on the world stage and build capabilities to ensure efficiency, transparency and effectiveness of the decision-making process.

The role of the UN as a mediator between states and polycentric world requires its functional and structural reform in order to reflect the global redistribution of power. Specifically there are two main ways of the United Nations development:

1) A gradual increasing of the legitimacy of the Security Council and its effectiveness;

2) The evolution of the UN Security Council towards quasi government (General Assembly - the equivalent of national parliaments, the IMF - the world's central bank, etc.).

Today there are a lot of discussions about the role of the UN in global governance. It is proposed to consider the UN as an executive body of U.S. and its satellites, because only advanced and developed democracies can ensure democratic legitimacy and practical effectiveness of the United Nations. In another embodiment it is offered to provide all sovereign states (or their people) in the UN with equal rights in political decision-making that meets the basic principles of liberal democracy.

However, if the UNO is considered as a supranational organization that would perform the functions of global government, the question of reforming the organization will become urgent. Scientists have expressed many ideas about this issue. Thus, George Soros, supports the idea of a radical reform of the UN towards a global civil society. The main cause of structural imperfections in the UN, in his opinion, is the fact that while declaring immutable principle of national sovereignty, the UN "pushes" itself in a logical trap, where the interests of states does not necessarily coincide with the interests of the people. Another important aspect in the process of UN reform is to address the mismatch position of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Since in practice the permanent members rarely reach agreement on the most important issues, the council "as is theoretically the most powerful institution on earth" actually blocks the UN, transforming the organization into an inefficient structure.

One way to reform the UN, according to many experts, is to create another assembly based on proportional representation by population, regardless of nation states. This structure will be similar to the bicameral U. S. Congress and could claim to be a world parliament.

However, many scientists are skeptical relating to this proposal, arguing about the impossibility of the concept of democratic representation on a "one person - one vote" scheme in today's world. To effectively reform the United Nations in the way of enhancing its effectiveness in the system of global power, it is necessary to percept the realities of modern global world. F. Fukuyama proposes to recognize these realities as the following statements:

1. The old scheme of international relations, according to which the world order formed solely on the basis of sovereign nation states are no longer suitable for the modern world, and in the future can not ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of the organization in the international arena.

2. UN can operate successfully in such areas as peacekeeping and nation-building, but it is structurally limited in the simultaneous ensuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of the other activities.

3. The UN is not a hierarchical organization, capable of decisive actions. It can act only by consensus, and it is partially dependent on its sponsors in attempts to use material resources, military forces and equipment.

4. Realistic schemes of international actions, effective and legitimate at the same time, should be kept in mind in the development of a new UN institutions and the adaptation of existing to new conditions. Further UN function should not be performed by a global institution, but by a network of international organizations, "which could provide the power and legitimacy of actions against various attacks against international order."

Conclusion

In today's globalized world, the question of creating a united institution of global governance has become

urgent. Today there are several organizations that are able to partially fulfill this role, but the most reputable and authorized one is the United Nations. On the one hand, the UN has the required structures to perform the role of global power. On the other hand, as the most famous and sustainable institution of global governance UN does not correspond to many of the challenges, and therefore needs a radical reform.

References

- [1] Biloshytsky S. O ON ysystemi global'nogo upravlinnya: perspektyvy reformyvannya i demokratyzatsyy. [The UN in global governance system: prospects for reforms and democratization], Naykovyi zhurnal "Gileya" – Gileya research Journal, 2010 - №30.
- [2] Ian Goldin, Tiffany Vogel, Global Governance and Systemic Risk in the 21st Century, LSE Global Policy Journal Vol 1, No 1, 2010. [Online]. Available: <http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/articles/global-governance/global-governance-and-systemic-risk-21st-century> [Accessed: Jun. 2010]
- [3] Thematic Debate on Global Governance [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/65/initiatives/globalgovernance.shtml> [Accessed: 28 June 2011]
- [4] Thomas G. Weiss, UN Intellectual History project, Briefing Note №15, August 2009 [Online]. Available: <http://www.unhistory.org/briefing/15GlobalGov.pdf> [Accessed: Aug. 2009]