

THE IMPACT OF GEOPOLITICS ON UNITED NATIONS

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Abstract

Geopolitical risks and challenges pose a huge challenge to all international actors, from countries, NGOs, to transnational corporations and international organizations. Geopolitics itself has a huge impact and significance on the formation of the world order, and thus inevitably with the hierarchy of the world and its constituent parts. The functioning of international organizations regardless of their character is conditioned by the great geopolitical leaders such as USA, Russia, France, UK and China. This is especially obvious in the UN. These countries are trying to achieve their geopolitical goals with the assistance and help of the right and power of veto and therefore paralyzing the work of UN and UN led operations. It should be emphasized in particular that the role of the United Nations is not to uphold or reject a particular order and hierarchy in the world, but to guarantee peace and security for all. The UN should not be an extended arm to achieve the goals of certain states, nor tool to gain geopolitical power. This is because some countries think that by being the biggest contributors to the financing of international organizations, they should have the greatest rights, benefits and advantages in the fields of security, economics, international relations over other countries.

Keywords: security, relations, countries, organization

1. Introduction

Centuries of global conflict and strife have taught us that the world is better when nations work together. (Garcés, 2019). Security is usually a matter of complex interlinkages among actors at a variety of scales, and how local arrangements are supported and enforced, or not, requires thinking about these larger geopolitics too. (Megoran & Dalby, 2018, page 263)

The international community, through dialogue and concerted efforts, has made remarkable gains in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, human rights, women peace and security, youth peace and security, and climate action. (Garcés, 2019)

In the history of UN resolutions to allow intervention into conflicts between states, the euphemism "all necessary means" usually indicates that armed intervention may be sanctioned by the UN and therefore have force of law. However, before that ultimate step is reached, a variety of other tools are available to the global community to defuse violent conflict. (Braden & Shelley, 2000, page 130)

The single best way to mitigate rising threats is to pursue dialogue and to strengthen multilateralism. The international community must be fully committed to the principles of engagement and cooperation, that's what multilateralism stands for. Multilateralism, through dialogue, negotiation and international cooperation, provides the most suitable platform to discuss and reach agreements in search of a common understanding. (Garcés, 2019)

Tensions at the U.N. Security Council and other global and regional institutions can reduce the international community's ability to pressure local actors to prevent conflict from escalating and support more accountability in countries. (Marc & Jones, 2021)

2. United Nations

The institutions and systems that were born out of the ashes of World War II, including the United Nations, have allowed our societies to flourish. Through shared responsibility and accountability, shared burdens and costs, we have helped to reduce, if not abolish, inter-state war, and have seen significant reductions in famine and poverty coupled with massive gains in development and the protection of human rights. (Garcés, 2019)

The most important intergovernmental organization which seeks to promote international co-operation and peaceful exchange is the United Nations (UN). Under the 1945 Treaty of San Francisco, the international community created the UN in the hope that the anguish of the Second World War could be replaced by peace, dialogue and universal solidarity. The purpose of the UN was spelt out in the UN Charter (111 articles), which defined common goals for the world community such as the implementation of particular moral values and standards for international relations. Signatories to the UN Charter had to commit themselves to: the peaceful resolution of disputes, the sovereign equality of all members, the principle of collective security and a range of other social, political and cultural concerns. The UN sought to maintain order and codify certain forms of behavior as either acceptable or unacceptable. (Dodds, 2005, page 41)

The United Nations is an international organization that is, in essence, state-led and state-run. Yet, states are far from the only actors present at UN forums and conferences. Rather than a narrow diplomatic corps consisting solely of traditional state diplomats, UN diplomacy is constituted of a ‘larger and more complex diplomatic community’ that includes an array of non-state actors. (McConnell, 2020, page 1018)

‘UN charter model’ of world politics to describe a world in which: states co-existed with other social and political actors, co-operation was not limited between states, rules and regulations were used to eliminate unacceptable features of world politics such as genocide and war and where the territorial boundaries of states were blurred by transnational and supranational relationships. (Dodds, 2005, page 39)

2.1. United Nations, its difficulties and challenges: You can tell an international system is out of touch with reality when it risks repeating the grave mistake of previous international orders determined to uphold the status quo even in the face of inescapable change. (Klieman, 2015, page 1)

For critics of liberal institutionalism, the performance of the UN is indicative of the difficulties inherent in this body of thought. During the Cold War, the role of the UN was effectively neutralized by a number of ‘Great Powers’ (China, France, the UK, the USA and the USSR) who made up the permanent members of the Security Council. Armed with the power of veto, these states habitually paralyzed the UN and its executive orders, often on the basis that particular UN operations or directives would interfere with their own strategic or political goals. The alleged sovereign equality of UN member states was frequently exposed as ‘hollow’ during the Cold War as and when the Great Powers either ignored UN resolutions or violated the sovereign rights of Third World states. (Dodds, 2005, page 42)

One institutional manifestation of this resistance to change, or slowness in adapting to it: the five original veto-empowered members of the United Nations Security Council remain immovably secure in their seats more than 70 years later. Neither replaced nor reinforced by new peer powers, this institutional rigidity denies—indeed, defies—more recent shifts in the real foci of global influence and responsibility. Today our shared future is in the hands of not one, nor two nor even five “Great Powers” but perhaps a dozen or more key regional actors who will doubtless answer the salient concerns of international politics: Amity, or enmity? Peace, or war? Order, or disorder? Stability, or instability? Cooperation, or conflict? Integration, or separatism? Growth, or stagnation? (Klieman, 2015, page 1)

Turning to world politics, arguably the greatest challenge of our times lies in striking a proper balance between extremes: between order and disorder, between hegemony and anarchy, between collective norms and individual freedoms, between the international and the national, between permanency and change. (Klieman, 2015, page 253)

3. United Nations and Geopolitics

In a world where there is much to know, there are also many ways of knowing. Claims to one particular way of knowing have frequently been exposed as either misrepresenting or excluding a variety of histories, places and contemporary experiences. Explaining contemporary world politics is extremely complex, not only because the range of materials available is substantial but also because the scope of interpretation is wide-ranging. (Dodds, 2005, pages 26-27). States are not the only influential force in international politics. The activities of multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations and firms are considered to be of importance. It is abundantly clear that states have to operate within a world economic system not only where flows of capital and technology transcend territorial boundaries but where the activities of business corporations who operate in more than one country or region also influence this process. Multinational corporations often enjoy considerable independence from particular governments even if they are identified as 'American' or 'Japanese' firms. The presumption that states pursue so-called national interests often underestimates the importance of sectional interests, which may be represented as national interests for political reasons. Analyses of international politics often neglect patterns of economic relations to the detriment of the structure of the international political system. International relations are thus reduced to a concern for the interaction between states through diplomatic and political arenas rather than focusing on the reciprocal action between the world economy and the power of the state. (Dodds, 2005, page 33)

Challenging conventional categories of international or global politics is part and parcel of a critical evaluation of the role of geographical knowledge and its influence on social and political practices. (Dodds, 2005, page 30)

By focusing on the micro-political practices within the UN that it can emerge as a revealing site of geopolitics. This is underpinned by two particular spatial dynamics. First, is the fact that, as a members club, the UN is an institution premised on practices of inclusion and exclusion and the differentiation of actors as inside or outside the organization has implications for access to certain spaces and how particular individuals and groups behave within that space. Second, individuals with these prescribed identities as members and non-members are, at particular times and in particular places within the UN buildings, in close proximity. They might encounter each other in corridors, sit next to each other in conference rooms and, in certain circumstances speak during the same session. (McConnell, 2020, page 1018)

If geopolitical aid or aid given to recipients with political leverage more generally is less effective than other aid, the literature using political connections as instruments would not provide evidence of the ineffectiveness of overall aid, but rather of aid given to politically important countries. Their estimates would represent a lower bound for the effects of overall aid. (Dreher et al., 2016, page 5)

Geopolitics is becoming increasingly complex. In order to achieve a mutual benefit between regions, it is necessary to develop an analytical and strategic management perspective. (Presenza & Sheehan, 2018, page 315)

3.1. UN and geopolitical hierarchy: For those who believe that the UN has real influence on the world by setting rules and norms between nations, many feel that the country who pays the piper must name the tune, and this is not happening. For those who believe that despite all these apparent superpowers, the UN merely reflects the agendas of the states within it, they may take a more laissez-faire attitude to the UN budget. Either way, the national makeup of senior positions that run the UN can tell us a lot about which countries are actually calling the shots in world affairs. (Duffy, 2022, pages 1-9)

Whether in geo-politics or geo-economics the idiom, "he who pays the piper calls the tune" is almost as old as humanity, and the idiom "who pays for the UN" is certainly as old as the UN. How we pay for the UN is a formula which dates to the end of WW2 and to the power-structures which prevailed at the time of the UN's

gestation, the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions, and of course post-war geo-politics and geo-economics. Delicately, it was a formula which considered the mess left by global war and the power structures of a new world order, who would have to shoulder geo-political and geo-economic responsibilities for the post-war recovery. Normally in life we would expect the biggest treasurer to have the most influence but in the UN system the most powerful remain the permanent five members, their powers solidified on the cold cement holding up the first UN flagpole erected in 1947. Veto power in the Security Council lies firmly with those permanent five so the UN is not an organization recognizing the principle “pay to play.” How about the UN charter, founded on Sovereign Equality and Big Power Politics? should tiny Tonga with a mere 100 000 inhabitants continue to have the same voting power as USA or China? Now voting power in the UN system means many different things so we should not get carried away on a pipe dream of sovereign equality. It is more realistic to regard the UN as a global entity frozen in geo-political time and hamstrung by the delicate mechanisms of a 1945 clock which threatens at any time to send the whole planet back into upheaval. It is a bit like the plumber and the old plumbing. Tinker with the UN’s governance at your peril. (Duffy, 2022, pages 1-9)

There exists a geopolitical hierarchy among the leading states that is more directly responsive to relative power than is the formally established hierarchy of the UN. For instance, the United States as a hegemonic actor has exerted an influence on the manner in which the UN operates that extends far beyond its status as a permanent member of the Security Council. It not only possesses the benefits of its formal status, but it relies on its political and financial leverage to distort political reality in its favor. (Dallmayr et al., 2014, page 6)

Either despite being a military and economic power, there are countries that haven’t yet been able to project soft power. Or you can take another view, that these countries are rejecting the global system. Either way, it’s not clear that it’s in the best interest of the world for these rising powers to take a back seat when it comes to solving international conflicts.” (Duffy, 2022, pages 1-9)

More over the geopolitical effect of the countries coincide with UNSC membership and disappear after the temporary member loses its extraordinary geopolitical importance. (Dreher et al., 2016, page 15)

3.2. United Nations and Euro West centric world order: There are two negative implications of Euro West centric world order, which are particularly ill adapted to the needs and aspirations of the early twenty-first century. First of all, there exists a persisting Euro/West centric denial of civilizational equality that no longer corresponds, even geopolitically, to the circumstances of a post-colonial world order in which sovereign states now formally represent the non-Western peoples of the world. At the same time, this formally anachronistic legacy of Euro/West centrism is embodied with distorting consequences in the structure of the United Nations. Four of the five permanent members of the Security Council must be considered to be primarily associated with the EuroWestcentric domain, with China being the fifth, and only non-Eurocentric political actor enjoying this status. It can be pointed out that the General Assembly gives each state the same status regardless of size or wealth, but needs also to be noticed that the General Assembly was deliberately subordinated to the hierarchical Security Council. Whereas the Security Council can make decisions, mandating even war on occasion, the most that the General Assembly can do is to make recommendations, and exhibit its support or opposition to proposed courses of action. (Dallmayr et al., 2014, pp. 4-5)

The Charter accords dominant states an exceptional status, via the veto, which effectively confers an unrestricted right to exempt themselves (and their friends) from obligations under international law. This capacity to block decisions in the UN Security Council that are perceived as adverse to their strategic and ideological interests is a radical denial of the equality of states as an organizing principle of world order. It places the mantle of UN constitutionalism on the geopolitical governance of the planet. And behind this constitutional move lies the even more hierarchical character of power relations, giving the United States a

degree of influence that far exceeds what derives from its status as one of five permanent members of the UNSC. (Dallmayr et al., 2014, pp. 4-5)

4. Conclusion

The first is that, as a matter of law, we have formally moved beyond a world of empires and greater spaces to a world of states. The second is that, as a matter of practice, the international legal order is still vulnerable to the expansionist ambitions of hegemonic powers. While the attempts at regional ordering engaged in by great powers may be a fact of international politics, such conduct is considered to operate outside international law. The state is the normative political subject of international law, and any move away from the ‘geography of statehood’ as the foundation of the international legal system is seen as novel and exceptional. (Orford, 2021, pages 149-194)

The UN appears as a sterile site of geopolitics: its status as a global power broker has seemingly diminished, and its day-to-day business is sluggish thanks to oppressive protocol. Moreover, as a space of ostensibly formal geopolitics conducted by elite actors, institutions such as the UN run counter to critical geopolitics’ recent focus on the everyday, embodied and intimate practices of geopolitics. (McConnell, 2020, page 1018)

Geographies of peace must attend to geopolitics: not instead of the fine-grained, local, thick descriptions of peace in specific places, but as well as this. This includes understanding and interrogating the multi-layered, nested geographies of geopolitical actors including states, regional blocs, global inter-and non-governmental organizations, Transnational Corporations (TNCs), the architectures of international finances, offshore territories. (Megoran & Dalby, 2018, page 263)

It can be argued that this deference to geopolitical forces is a necessary acknowledgment of the actuality of inequality among the members of the United Nations that potentially allows the Organization to operate effectively because its affirmative decisions will necessarily enjoy support from the political actors with implementing capabilities. It is often argued that the League of Nations failed, in part, because of its refusal to accommodate geopolitics. (Dallmayr et al., 2014, pp. 4-5)

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