

## The UN in a Dilemma

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The reforming of the UN has always been discussed. But at the end of the Cold War, when in 1992, at India's initiative, the General Assembly was consulted about the reforming of the institution, the majority of the states were in favor of this idea, stressing upon the reforming of the Security Council. It was a signal that the members of the organization had a correct perception on the necessity and on the key-point that had to be aimed at.

Subsequently a new reforming trend appeared and the General Secretary, Boutros Boutros Ghali, admitted having studied 22 reorganization proposals. All these had certain consequences, but one could speak of changes rather than of an actual reform<sup>1</sup>. Around the jubilee of 50 years of existence, the pro-reformist trend became more conspicuous and so did the differences between the outlooks. On the one hand, European and American proposals mentioned the re-inventing or the re-creation of the organization, the reduction of budget (to which the USA contribute in the highest degree) and the transfer of the UN's economic and social activities to the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and BIRD). On the other hand, the proposals of developing countries were oriented more towards the organization's democratization and a higher representation of their problems. It was seen that the Americans and the Europeans conceive of the reform rather in the sense of an increase of the efficiency, while the others stressed upon legitimacy. Eventually, in 1996, Boutros Boutros Ghali became undesirable to the US, which accused him of opposing the reform. The USA reduced their

contribution to the organization's budget and then used the right of veto against the Egyptian diplomat.

Thanks to his successor, Kofi Annan, the report entitled *The Renewal of the United Nations. A Reform Program* was drawn up. According to the new General Secretary, this document contained "the most daring and important reforms from the 52 years history of the organization"<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless the entire "reform" program contained only structural and administrative changes of the kind of those made in a company to increase profitability<sup>3</sup>.

Besides the initiatives of the General Secretary, the reform was in the attention of the 5 work groups established by the General Assembly in 1992. The group in charge with the reform of the Security Council discussed the problem of representation, of the increase of the number of members in this forum and of decisional procedures (including the right of veto). Obviously all these being related were approached together. In general, many countries were attracted by the increase of the number of members, as the extension proposals insisted especially on the inclusion of representatives of developing countries in Asia, South America and Africa, besides Germany and Japan as acknowledged industrialized states. It was considered that the extension of the Security Council would increase the **representativeness** of this forum and would also emphasize its **democratic character** and stress the **legitimacy** of its decisions. Of course, but this would not increase the **authority** and **efficiency** of its decisions, and this objection

was expressed by some states. Putting the Great Powers into inferiority by stressing upon democracy would determine these powers not to be interested to support the organization, which would grow weak without their support. Therefore there is a problem. In 1945, at the founding of the organization, this democratic principle was combined with an elitist one by creating the restricted club of some permanent members having the right of veto and the criterion of this inequality was Power exclusively. Pleasant or not, the mixture of the two principles, democratic and elitist, was a formula that before anything else was aimed at giving the world stability. And in spite of the numerous criticisms that can be easily made, it can be said to have been a good and, to a great extent, a successful formula.

This is why, although the reform is undoubtedly necessary, the modification of the present formula through projects of reorganization of the Security Council is an extremely delicate aspect. Stressing upon democracy cannot be seen as good in itself with no regard to other reasons. A very democratic, but weak and lacking in authority organization wouldn't serve anybody and especially wouldn't serve the weak developing states, which need exactly the contrary. Power has its role and is indispensable. As far as the USA are concerned, they pointed on several occasions to this truth and gave the UN to understand that without their help the UN is condemned.

On the other hand, the reverse situation, the reforming by stressing upon the elitist principle of power, isn't a desirable formula either, because, in the last analysis, it would be made by sacrificing stability too. Power is necessary, but it creates stability only when acknowledged, accepted and changed into authority. But after the Cold War the US seem seduced especially by a reform of the elitist type. In one of the projects they proposed an extension of only five members of the Security Council, an extension very much below what the developing states propose. But it isn't so much the small

number that draws the attention, but the fact that these new members should be Japan, Germany and other three developed states. Such a project that would extend the Council only to turn it into a club of rich and developed states presents the advantage that it would rapidly be efficient, but only on short term. On long term it would compromise the organization. Developing states would see the Council as some kind of rich North club realized by sacrificing the poor South. The suspicions that never disappeared would increase so that the decisions would have the support of enough power, but not of enough legitimacy. The formula would leave outside the other side of the binomial and stability wouldn't be obtained. The world would be restless.

More or less explicitly there is an awareness of the fact because we can follow its concrete manifestation. It is reflected by the way in which various projects increase or diminish the number of states which have to represent the problems of African, South American and Asian states, in the way in which they establish the numerical report between permanent and non-permanent members, in the way they rethink the right of veto etc.

Therefore the entire problem of reforming the UN is reduced to establishing how much power and how much legitimacy must be introduced in the formula and assembled in order to be efficient. Since they both are parameters whose dynamic registers different accelerations, the reform of the UN becomes more and more imperative and cannot be limited to structural and administrative changes within the province of the General Secretary. The idea of a "re-invention" is to be taken seriously.

According to us, a world of the future that shall shelter the transformations and convulsions of globalization cannot be imagined in the absence of UN. It already seems worrying to us that many American politicians and political analysts tend to ignore the UN that, after the end of the Cold War, seems anachronistic, inefficient,

disturbing and difficult to reform. This can be explained. If during the Cold War the US felt the necessity of the international institution because they could ask there for the legitimacy of the actions of the rival superpower, at the present time the same institution seems more useless, since, as unique superpower, the same game can turn against themselves. But leaving all these aside, for more profound and lasting reasons, the system of the future world will have to contain an organization of this kind, be it a profoundly reformed UN or a third institution like SN and UN. A rethinking of the principle itself is therefore necessary. All the parties must understand that compromises are necessary because the alternative is an organization that some let die and others can't save. This is why UN has to be rethought as daringly and as radical as it takes to give the world what it needs.

It is to be taken into consideration that the reform that has become necessary will not be the last one. An institution of this kind will permanently be threatened by the danger of remaining behind the reality in which it has to function and consequently will periodically find itself, like at the present time, in the situation of being profoundly reformed. Little do we know about this and so far the experience is not encouraging. No reform was made in the past, because the formula of both SN and UN, after having been established, was maintained as such until when the signs of a crisis appeared. Every time a cataclysmic phenomenon was necessary for the pressure to be strong enough for the formula to be established fast. But the end of the Cold War had nothing of the pressure of a cataclysm, on the contrary, it created a depressurization and the present conditions are totally inadequate for a founding consensus.

These conditions hide the answer of a future UN. The new formula, on whatever period it may be projected, will have to be elaborated starting from two analyses: an evaluation of power and legitimacy in the present situation of the world system and a

prognosis on the evolution and the challenges the system will have to answer.

If we judge the present situation under the aspect of power, two categories of states are interested in the existence of the UN.

Obviously, above all there are the numerous weak states of the planet, whose condition turns them into marginal actors in international life. Naturally all these states consider the UN to be a modality to protect themselves from powerful states and therefore are interested in the legitimacy of military interventions, that is, that these should take place with the UN approval. There isn't anything new about this, but now, when international relations are dominated by the USA, certain states in unstable regions have become particularly suspicious about American actions. The disappearance of the bipolar system led to the disappearance of that logic according to which the states hoped to gain action field by speculating the rivalry of superpowers. In case they sense a complex of insecurity, they are aware they can't protect themselves from the pressure of a superpower by resorting to another. And, given that now and in the near future there is no credible counterweight to the US, these states put their hope in the democratization of international politics on the international scene and therefore on the reinforcement of the UN's role. There are paradoxical situations when antidemocratic states ask for a democratization of international life, whereas democratic states, especially the US, sometimes tend to forget it. Garry Wilis considers his country chose to lead the world by dismissing those regimes it identifies as enemies of freedom, although sometimes they were elected by the people itself. Therefore the people have the right to choose, but not also the right to choose not to choose anymore. Now having the possibility to dictate, the US have become, according to this author, a classical case in which the "leader" demands: "Do what I say, not what I do!"<sup>4</sup>. Of course things are not exactly like this, but the perception is very important. This is why one mustn't be

surprised that in the Gulf for instance a state like Iran asks and will insistently ask for any action using force to take place only under the UN's warrant, even when, as in its case, this force is directed against Iraq, its old enemy and religious rival.

To sum up, as far as these states are concerned, nothing new as principle can be noticed, only the need to strengthen the organization increased after the end of the Cold War. And it is interesting to notice in this context that some of these states are trying to turn the UN into an organization protecting them from the US, the state that in 1918 demanded for and imposed this institution through the voice of its president, so to say, the state most entitled to the paternity of the institution. An American idea turned against America.

But the true novelty concerns the category of much more powerful states, those that Samuel Huntington calls in a study "major powers"<sup>5</sup> and which we traditionally call "great powers", that is, states such as France, Great Britain, Germany etc. The name matters less. These are those states, not many, that after the apparition of superpowers at the end of the Second World War placed themselves immediately after these, and now are after the USA (Russia being now among themselves). The characteristic of their position in the hierarchy is that they are at a long distance from the existent superpower and from the other states on the next level. This characteristic of the power hierarchy, the established decision tasks discourage rivalries for now and constitute one of the main explanations for which the present world system has had for over a decade an exceptional stability.

But it is a dynamic stability (which is also desirable, according to us). The internal agitation comes from the fact that, even if the "concert" formula of the former power equilibrium is outdated for good, something seems to return from the former logic of the concert. The hegemonic superpower, which reunites all the dimensions of power to an extent that has no historical precedent, is

tempted to detach itself more from the level of great powers<sup>6</sup>. If it did there would be an establishment of a mono-polar system which, according to Huntington, would mean the US could solve any international problem without the cooperation of any of the great powers (which at the present moment are necessary to them) and even against the will of the great powers if necessary. In this sense a series of actions of the USA from the last decade could be interpreted as pressure put more or less on the world system to push it into mono-polar formula. By managing to regulate the situation in Bosnia, the US have proved their capacity to solve overt problems, in this case in the heart of Europe- the space of most great powers- and in situations in which the great powers had failed. The intervention in Kosovo is somewhat different. It is true it was made in partnership with some great powers, like the recent NATO extension. It is true both these last actions implied partnership with European great powers. Indeed, the US cannot do without their help for wide-spreading actions on the international scene yet. But on the other hand the US depend only partially on these and can defy them. They only need allies in order not to seem to be isolate and promoting a single point of view. The intervention in Kosovo proved the availability to act against the will of one of the most suspicious of these great powers (Russia) and especially the availability to take the risk of an action in the absence of the legitimacy conferred by the UN, especially if this last aspect of the intervention was felt as a powerful pressure liable to push the world system into a mono-polar formula. Very recent and particularly significant is the pressure put on the European Union in favor of Turkey's joining the EU and especially the project that, at the moment of writing, seems to have been designed for a new intervention in Iraq. Particularly significant in this context are the reactions of some European great powers which, like France and Germany, are more moderated than the US. Confronted by Great

Britain's position as *raisonneur*, the French and German attitude of reserve is meant to individualize the EU by proving that the Paris-Berlin axis remains the Union's spokesman, not the too obedient London. In its turn, Russia's reserve counterbalances Britain's position.

Therefore the situation remains complex. Like during the "concert", the powers' policy is aimed at hindering the individual voluntarism of the hegemonic superpower. This has to be put in connection with the observation made by Huntington in his 1999 study that international problems can be solved by the US only through the coalition. In time, some of the US's tendencies to take action according to a mono-polar situation failed. Four years have passed since the American political analyst's affirmation (which is a significant interval for the development speed of contemporary processes), but the observation is still valid—a proof that in this interval the great powers managed to moderate the hegemonic superpower as efficiently as in the times of the "concert" equilibrium.

Unlike in those historical times, the great powers of the present have a more equivocal position and a more varied attitude. For half a century they have been adapting to a secondary status in the system and have achieved the skill to exploit its advantages, a fact that varies more the relations between most great powers and the superpower. Their policy of moderating the US is neither constant nor unitary. To those European powers their civilization identity with the US makes more fundamental interests overlap and in certain situations it becomes profitable that some common goals should be achieved through the efforts of the superpower. If this one sustains most of the costs and the benefits are divided in a much more equilibrated proportion, the situation can be considered as convenient for the great powers. In the conditions of a profitable exploitation of the hegemonic superpower, which is impossible for any of the great powers, the counterbalancing of the US can be achieved by the European Union on its whole.

Inevitably, the UN was used in all this game of power. The superpower permanently confronts itself to the demand of states that ask for any action on the international scene to be legitimate. According to the actual situation and the conjectural relations with the US, some great powers invoked the necessity of legitimacy, making this demand to be more or less unanimous. The great powers— not even the European ones— haven't a unitary position as far as the hegemonic superpower is concerned. After 1989, no matter what position they may adopt, be it restrictive or permissive, the great powers rarely do it simultaneously, the case of the intervention in Iraq in 1990 being almost unique. Only their reaction after September 11th 2001 show a similar unanimity, but afterwards it diversified very fast. It is explicable, because avoiding a mono-polar system is a reason only in the last analysis, and beyond this the differences exceed the common points. It stands to reason that China has its own motivations for its policy and doesn't join European states and so does Russia, which remains a "fascinating" country, as M. Albright once said, that is, is indefinite and has an equivocal position in the system. But neither are the Europeans unitary, although they would have more solid reasons to be. Its belonging to the EU doesn't hinder Great Britain to support the US consistently; Germany's situation can be said to have a certain specificity etc. it is clear then that the game of the great powers has to be deciphered from case to case. Besides these particularities, the present level of great powers is not represented symmetrically in the Security Council, which makes these states relate themselves differently to the UN.

Like many great powers, but from different reasons, the numerous weak states haven't a unitary position either. They assess the necessity of legitimacy of international actions, but usually their historical past has taught them too well the lessons of political realism to cherish illusions. They recur to the UN when they have no other solution.

Otherwise, whenever they have the possibility, they prefer a privileged relation with the superpower. They are usually caught in intricate policies at the level of their region or of their geopolitical unity and have rivals or enemies at this level. Their outlook is less universalist, because it is centered on territorial, ethnical or religious litigations with regional meaning, like India and Pakistan etc. this is why their way of conceiving of their security looks like Europe's former way, according to the logic of the "concert- like equilibrium". Almost all the time such a "concert" that developed its functionality has to be found at the level of a regional geopolitical unity. Therefore the "concert" hasn't died but like an outdated technology it was taken over by the peripheral parts of the world system. In this situation every state of this kind is willing to establish a relation with the superpower and uses this relation as an argument in its local rivalries. When the US intervened in Afghanistan, such a behavior could be seen in Pakistan's case, which now avails itself of the results of the relations with the superpower by continuing to experiment the use of some missiles whose significance has to be understood especially by India, its regional rival.

There is therefore no unitary or consistent position of the states with regard to the superpower and this in spite of the fact that the present distribution of power on the planet has a more stable configuration than ever. Like the former League of Nations, the UN comes to reflect these power relations and is weakened by the interests these promote. Both weak and powerful states bring their contribution, so the UN's present situation is probably more confuse than in the years of the Cold War. Many contemporary analysts, historians and jurists have noticed that the prestige of the universal body is diminishing and don't hesitate to compare the situation with the agony of the Society of Nations, like we did above. Of course there can be brought counter-arguments like the one that the

former League of Nations formed without integrating very important states like the Soviet Russia and Germany (by then defeated in the war), like the US (by then isolationist), and on the way it lost Japan which defied it etc. So to say, the League of Nations seems to have failed because it left outside vast entities of power and it is unrealistic to discuss the viability of an international institution outside this central component which is power. On the contrary, the UN seems to have solved nowadays this problem by becoming all- inclusive.

Apparently exact, the argument is only partially correct. In fact even nowadays vast entities of power are not correctly represented or remain completely outside the organization and this under two aspects. Firstly because great powers like Japan or Germany, although they have representation, haven't a correct one. As the organization was conceived at the end of the last world war, it reflects the situation at those times, while the contemporary reality is extremely different. By leaving aside some remaining antipathies, these states and maybe some other too should become permanent members of the Security Council. In the meantime they have become again great powers, have stable and responsible regimes and a certain military inferiority is not only easily recoverable, but is not even very significant if related to the other forms of power that these states fully possess. The efficiency, the prestige and the authority of the organization would only benefit from such an extinction of the Security Council. Until then there will be **non-represented power** and the UN runs the risk of the League of Nations' lethargy. From the perspective of power and its representation only a reform concerning the center of the Security Council would offer a satisfactory solution. There are yet many hesitations about this and many personalities which express their skepticism.

But how much power remains non-represented? And what kind of power?

Much more than between the two world wars. There are no more non-represented states, but now there are other great entities of power of non- state nature.

In the half century since the conceiving of the UN's structure, the reality of power has become more subtle and polyform, involving economical, financial, scientific, technological, informational and even ideological, cultural and religious forms unequally distributed.

Of all, those forms favored by the scientific and technological revolution have continuously enlarged and diversified the panoply of developed states. In reflex, these states have generated international institutions with financial, commercial, scientific, military etc character, have become interconnected and have generated greater power. A proportional representation of power would be in their favor more than ever in history. The power excess which is not represented in the UN is to be found in other international institutions (of which the most viable belong to the developed states).

With a certain delay the reaction of the undeveloped states has chaotically oriented itself towards the forms unaffected by the technical and scientific revolution, by ideology culture, religion. After the failures of African and Asian "democracy" or "socialism" in the last decades, the only available forms of power remained traditional culture and religion. Power has its alchemy that interchanges its forms. Fundamentalist trends try to obtain the rest out of religion and traditionalism and sometimes manage to do it so efficiently that they can obtain funds and technology, conquer political power in certain states and undertake against adversaries actions equivalent to those of classical military power. In Iran and Afghanistan the revolution and the war resulted in the conquering of the state institution. In Algeria there have been similar attempts etc. In the Middle East the Palestinians have found such a profitable alchemy between religion and military power that they are causing the Israelis more casualties than any actual wars.

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 were another proof of efficiency in which goals usually achieved by means of military action were achieved by means of terrorist actions with a religious basis. September 11<sup>th</sup> marks a qualitative threshold: never before have the partisans or the guerillas hit such targets. The importance of the phenomenon mustn't be minimized, but considered in relation with the goals it aims at and achieves. It represents real power<sup>7</sup>.

To sum up, we could say that if the polyformy of power produced entities of non- state power in the developed world, the same thing took place afterwards in the non-developed world. The first produced transnational corporations, the latter transnational religious terrorism. Both are non-representable in the UN.

Therefore the UN and any similar institution is and will be aimed at contributing to the security and stability of the world. This is a matter of law and power and the organization must be in very explicit relations with both terms. The basic unit that reunited law and power and which was the only operational one was the state and this is why the state was put at the basis of the organization. The way in which it was believed to achieve the goal of security and stability was to represent the states as members enjoying the same rights.

In fact things happened differently. The state is in a more and more equivocal relation with power although both the security and stability of the world depend firstly on power not of a certain form, but of all forms. It would have to represent it satisfactorily, but this is unrealistic, firstly because partially power escapes the working unit (the state) or appears outside the state. The contradiction is between the fact that security and stability depend on all forms and the UN represents only some of them. This is not something new, but during the Cold War the fact was tolerable because rival superpowers concentrated enormous powers and to a certain extent the other forms of power, were influenced by the

gravitation of the poles. But nowadays the dispersion is in continuous growth and very probably it will generate surprising manifestations. Besides, in the shadow of the rivalries between superpowers, the integrating processes gave birth to the European Union and the future is not closed to other integrationist forms like this. All these represent realities that can't be noticed by the present UN unless modified to enter the expression of the state. Without the catastrophic imperative, the world could change radically before the organization could react otherwise than under the vague forms of condemning resolutions, humanitarian and peace maintaining missions etc. Representing only the states, at the present the UN can intervene only for amelioration, but not for prevention.

No matter what the reform's content may be, one thing I for sure: the UN remains only the organization of states. In exchange, a series of international institutions, born from the dynamic of power in the last half century, expresses better the realities that inevitably escape to the UN. What can be done in realistic terms is that the UN's reformation should be correlated more profoundly to the network of these institutions. Its reform mustn't be thought in itself, but must be seen more and more as part of a system of international institutions which is in continuous development. Its reform should be seen only in correlation with theirs. The UN might be thought to lose thus a certain personal dignity, but this is very unlikely to happen to an institution that cannot be replaced as legitimacy provider. It could gain in exchange a series of advantages, a tighter contact with very dynamic realities that otherwise will make it be overwhelmed at shorter and shorter intervals. It will get more of that power it cannot represent, or, more specifically, of its usufruct. It will improve considerably its efficiency conditions. It will increase its influence capacities over some centers of power and alongside its prestige in the world system. There would be no more attempts to

escape it, but it would become the best and accepted place for negotiation.

All these could belong to the future. The UN reformation presupposes a serious compromise capacity which presupposes a more complex world system than that in which we live, a multi-polar world and a greater dilemma. For the time being, in the present transition, the various parties involved take up out of inertia the forms institutional formulas, the imperative is too weak and will is separated from power. The will to take a compromise is reduced. Far from considering that they have to make concessions, many weakly developed states are reticent to the transfer of economic and social problems to the Bretton Woods institutions and to a Security Council extended in the advantage of the developed states. They insist on democratization and legitimacy. On the other side, the US mostly have a strong position and are little willing to make concessions to a reform which in their opinion, wants to turn an inefficient organization into a more inefficient one. They think they can do without the UN and don't want to finance their own opposition. They therefore prefer to let the institution drift until it becomes more concessive.

The great powers are not too interested in the reform either. As it can be seen from the recent Iraqi problem, the present architecture of the UN gives them enough possibilities to do their game with the superpower.

For the moment condemning resolutions, humanitarian and peace maintaining missions are successful forms of activity (although there have been failures too). But problems emerge here too when missions involve military interventions or other intercessions, because of the basic unit, the state, or because of the transformations it has undergone in the last century. Sovereignty is redefined etc. Yet nothing will replace the state as basic unit and it's hard to imagine a mixture in which other representations units can emerge alongside with the state.



Therefore, for the moment, the UN will stay mainly as it is. Its transformation to correspond to the post Cold War world will be slow and unspectacular. Excepting a not yet foreseeable multi-polar system, only the catastrophic accentuation of global challenges could accelerate things.

In the interval of this transition, the reform, as much as it will be, will have to discover its formula between power and legitimacy. A system with a democratic hegemonic superpower leads to the idea that the democratic legitimacy provider principle should and could be strengthened. No matter what the reasons for which now both the great powers and the weak states ask for legitimacy may be, historical experience in such cases proves that even after having cancelled the causes the effect persists. The first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will continue to want to be legitimate.

But realism takes to the conclusion that in a hegemonic system the democratic principle has to be strengthened alongside with the elitist one. The affirmation mustn't be understood as in favour of the US, since, from their positions, the great powers wouldn't want anything else. The formula will have to be the proof that the two are not incompatible.

This is what would happen if the Security Council would be enlarged with an unexaggerated number of permanent members among which the five developed states proposed by the American project (among which Germany and Japan) and the most representative states of the undeveloped world: India, Brazil, Nigeria. The inclusion of eight or nine states would contribute a lot to the democratic mediation of the decision. At the same time, the developed ones would lead to the increase of authority and efficiency. The other three would include the developing world in the elite of permanent members and would prevent suspicions concerning the North's domination. As far as the right of veto, that numerous states would want abolished, is concerned, the elitist principle of power will undoubtedly keep it, because its abolition is,

as Paul Kennedy and Bruce Russett say, "a splendid idea"<sup>8</sup>, but a fully unrealistic one. In exchange, we agree with their idea that the right of veto could be limited to problems connected to solving the conflicts.

The finance of the organization and the military intervention capacity are two of the most discussed problems and definitely some the reform must take into account. The present quota system makes the organization vulnerable either because the poor states are behind with their payments or because the rich ones make pressure to condition their quotas. In both situation an unhealthy atmosphere, which is incompatible with any principle of the states' equality of rights, is created in the organization. There have been many discussions about another finance system, for instance of putting a tax on some international financial transactions. It is evident it would be the first thing to be done to strengthen the organization. Although in our opinion as long as there is the right of veto, this would not make the organization more independent, because the taxes could be avoided like the quota, much better results could be obtained according to the taxation system and in any case the internal work climate would improve, which is very important. Specialists think the opinion is feasible in its financial aspect, but anyway the real problem were not money, but, as Richard Falk says<sup>9</sup>, the political control over the organization.

As far as the military force is concerned the same dependence on the member states can be noticed; syncope and delays come up when the states have to provide military units and hence failed actions. On the field the UN troops find themselves often in the situation to accomplish missions for whose difficulty they are numerically, logistically etc. inferior. The Dutch UN troops failed in Bosnia because of material and force inferiority, but the failure is perceived as a UN failure and affects its prestige. Paul Kennedy and Bruce Russett come up with the proposal of a rapid reaction force that would enable a prompt reaction. But the weak part of the idea is only that these

troops would have to be provided by states whose task would be to prepare them and put them at the UN's disposition<sup>10</sup>. More appealing is Richard Falk's idea that these forces should be made up of volunteers so that states shouldn't hesitate in case the life of their own citizens should be in danger. Combining the ideas, the solution would appear under the form of a professional military force based on international volunteering, organized under the form of fast intervention units permanently at the UN's disposition and financed in an independent system.

Undoubtedly, an independent finance and an armed force of its own would give the organization some of the power it lacks. As far as those inevitably non-represented forms of power, Richard Falk's opinion is somewhat like ours. As we further remain skeptical about a representation in the UN of other operational units than those of the states, we note with satisfaction an idea that couldn't change what has been said, but yet represents a step in this direction. R. Falk thinks the UN could connect the civil society and provide it a place in the structure in an Assembly of intergovernmental or non-governmental circles. Besides an

accentuation of the democratic character it has been so much discussed about, such an opening could be a beginning in order to operate with another basic unit than that of the state.

Similarly interesting, Falk comes up with the attractive idea of an Economic Security Council created in the UN. Once again the author is in favor of our ideas. Besides the fact that it would make the institution more adequate to the representation of economic power that has become very important in the last half century, such a creation would facilitate the UN's integration in the network of other international economical institutions. Its reform would be connected to their dynamic transformation and the UN would gain a more important role in formulating the global economical policy. And obviously through such activities the UN's possibility to lead real prevention politics could come true.

Therefore there are in the present reforming possibilities of a certain consistency. Even if the motivation of the involved factors is not very strong yet, the beginning of the reformist process before the great problem comes up could provide these factors with a good occasion to manifest that preventive wisdom the UN demands.

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Since the beginning of 2003, the most recent events on the international scene focus on the Iraqi problem and on the possibility of a war in the area. The tension has risen to a situation which might be qualified as equivalent with a crisis in the world system. In this situation the UN proves to the full its unique position of agora where legitimacy is obtained.

Less through the way in which it started and more through the course subsequently imparted by a series of actors, the present crisis achieved a maximum stake and has become one of those crises that contribute to the formation of the new world order. Or if we take into account the dimension of the stake, it is no longer surprising that we assist to a series of new events. Among them, the

appearance of a separation in the UN and, more surprisingly, in the NATO. Prominent members of the NATO like France and Germany have become closer to Russia's position and considerably distant to the UN's. For the first time in its history the alliance hasn't had a unitary position with regard to the guarantee of one of its members (Turkey) and at the same time it marks an important landmark in the reforming of this military organization. Similarly, a series of bilateral relations between the USA and other actors have been or will have to be redefined in order to be favourable to these. This will certainly mark the history of the UN.

After more than a decade since the Cold War, we can now see the first massive and

articulate attempt to restrict the excess of power. According to a now classical logic, it appears as a coagulation at the secondary level of the great powers, but it uses the possibilities offered by the UN, the configuration of the present Security Council and the present voting system. It is evident that to the simple and unambiguous policy of the US the great powers have responded with a complicated and surprising political game that for the moment has confused the hegemonic power and to a certain political extent has managed to annihilate it. Aware of the fact that whatever it may be the solving of the present crisis will create a precedent and will give the world a moral, the US feel pushed into a difficult situation in which they will pay an important price for any of the solutions they will choose. Giving up the started action would be a signal in the sense that they have renounced imposing their own outlook to the historical process and in this case the excess of power they have would represent costs that bring no benefit and are therefore useless. Besides, the dismantling of the huge force demonstration will certainly be interpreted as weakness by the numerous hostile states and this might result into another series of losses. In the opposite case, continuing the action without legitimacy from the UN will put the US in the situation of confronting itself to the solitude of power and of supporting compensatorily the costs

of the various parasites and interested friendships. On the other hand it presents nevertheless the advantage of being the the only way to obtain benefits, and historical initiative is not given up. The most desirable alternative, that in which the US might take action according to its own vision, but with the UN's approval, seems to become more and more improbable. But it would be so advantageous, that even if the battle seems already lost from this point of view, the US keep making efforts to meet the votes necessary to the resolution they want. This is the implicit recognition of the UN's importance of whose necessity they sometimes affirm to doubt.

In the present international crisis the various analysts can notice contradictory elements regarding the future UN reformation. There will probably be voices affirming that in its present formula it still proves its democratic functionality and even the capacity to restrict the power.

But it is too early to state our opinion about this aspect. What is certain is that the great powers in the opposition have already managed to moderate the US's power by transferring to it almost all the costs of any nature that the solving of the crisis involves. And the most important of them are not the financial ones (although, unlike other situations after 1989, the US will support all by themselves).

## Note:

<sup>1</sup> See James Paul, *UN Reform: An Analysis*, [www.sfera.50megs.com](http://www.sfera.50megs.com). Boutros Boutros Ghali intended to reorganize the Secretariate, but the pressure put on him especially by the USA determined him to abandon the idea.

<sup>2</sup> *Sweeping measures announced by Secretary-General*, on [www.un.org/docs/SG.res/1997/97A/51/950.html](http://www.un.org/docs/SG.res/1997/97A/51/950.html).

<sup>3</sup> Aspects such as the competence and the diminution of the staff's age average, the increase of the coherence between compartments were taken into consideration, problems were re-grouped and certain committees were founded, departments were reorganized, the role of regional commissions was re-examined etc.

<sup>4</sup> Garry Wilis, "Bully of the Free World", in *Foreign Affairs*, 1999, vol. 78, no. 2

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower", in *Foreign Affairs*, 1999, vol. 78, nr. 2

<sup>6</sup> Very recently, after the September 11<sup>th</sup> events, the US have considerably increased their defense expenses. The sums are by far higher than the total of the budgets of the main European countries.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Howard considers the State Secretary Colin Powell made “an irrevocable mistake” when he declared that the US is “at war” with terrorism because thus terrorists are admitted to have a certain status and a certain implicit legitimacy (Michael Howard, *What’s in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism*, in “*Foreign Affairs*”, 2001, vol. 80, no. 6, p. 45). As far as we are concerned, we think the American State Secretary as a military expressed correctly what he thought. He didn’t acknowledge a certain legitimacy to the terrorists with this expression, but a certain power, enough in his opinion to speak about war.

Yet here a problem connected to power and legitimacy emerges. Michael Howard is obviously right: terrorism is not to be negotiated with, its legitimacy cannot be admitted. But this principle doesn’t necessary discourage a terrorist organization and to a certain degree it can be said to stimulate it. It hopes to accumulate enough power to reach a level that would enable it to demand negotiations, recognition and obtain legitimacy. Any organization’s dream is to do this alchemy. Anything can be done with enough power is its motto. Two evolutions are possible in this logic. The first one, in historical times, urged to conquering power in a state. If the state is powerful enough, sooner or later acknowledgement will come like in the case of Napoleon’s France, of Soviet Russia etc. The Talibans’ Afghanistan would have been recognized if it had had Russia’s or China’s power. The second one is the present one that notices the impossibility of such actions. This is why, in the latest forms, it avoids the state and gives up conquering power in a state. For the religious terrorism that took action on September 11<sup>th</sup> states are just hosts and it lives beyond them. By taking action in Afghanistan the US killed the dog, not the fleas.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Kennedy, Bruce Russett, “Reforming the UN”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 1995, vol. 74, no. 5, p. 56-68

<sup>8</sup> Richard Falk, *The UN System Prospects for Renewal*, on [www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2002/Falk\\_UNRenewal.html](http://www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2002/Falk_UNRenewal.html).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Kennedy, Bruce Russett, *op. cit.*