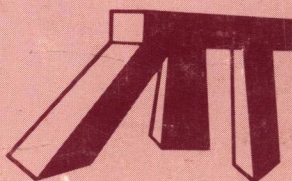


The Functioning and Effectiveness Of Selected United Nations System Programs

by
David A. Kay

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW



*Studies In
Transnational
Legal Policy
No. 18
\$12.00*

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Published by West Publishing Company

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kay, David A

The functioning and effectiveness of selected United Nations system programs.

(Studies in transnational legal policy ; no. 18)

1. United Nations. I. Title. II. Series.

JX1977.K344

341.23

79-27065

FOREWORD

This study was produced as a result of support given in 1977-78 by the U. S. Department of State to the International Organization Research Project of the American Society of International Law. During the past five years this Project has explored on a broad front present practices and future prospects of international management and regulatory activities. In this effort we have been motivated by the belief that a major global challenge is to develop approaches, policies and institutions capable of coping with a burgeoning number of problems that cannot be successfully managed within the confines of individual states. In this present report, we have attempted to explore some of the issues facing United Nations operational programs in three areas. It is expected that substantive portions of this report will be included in a forthcoming volume setting out other results of this Project.

In connection with the writing of this report, a number of debts of gratitude should be acknowledged. At every stage of the work, we received the full and helpful cooperation of U. S. and UN officials concerned with these issues. Without their assistance, a project such as this would not have been possible. Deep appreciation is also owed to Dorothea Bodison for the seemingly endless typing chore she has cheerfully undertaken.

This report does not purport to represent the views of The American Society of International Law (which as an organization does not take positions on matters of this kind). Similarly, the report's conclusion, findings, opinions, or recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State. The final responsibility for this report is solely borne by the author, who directed the International Organization Research Project of The American Society of International Law until June 1978.

DAVID A. KAY

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CHAPTER I

THE UNITED NATIONS AS AN OPERATIONAL SYSTEM

I. INTRODUCTION

Although generally masked by the drumfire of contentious political debate in the General Assembly, a major transformation in the UN system has occurred in the last eighteen years. Driven by the imperatives of emerging economic and technical interdependence and demands of developing countries for internationally-provided services, the UN system has been transformed. From essentially a center for debate and the passing of non-binding resolutions, the UN system has become a major operational activity that in 1976 expended approximately \$2.5 billion (not including World Bank lending of over \$5 billion a year), with a staff and programs in approximately one hundred countries. While the political functions of the UN certainly remain and usually manage to dominate journalistic and academic analysis of the system, a review of this system will make apparent the dimensions of this transformation.

In 1960 the total assessed budgets of all UN system agencies amounted to only \$183 million and World Bank lending was only \$602 million. By 1966, the total assessed budgets of the UN system agencies stood at only \$290 million, not including World Bank lending of just over \$800 million. The 1970s marked a period of explosive program growth in the UN system, as can be seen from Table I-1. In most programs more money was expended in the five-year period of 1970-74 than in the nineteen-year period of 1946-64. The special voluntary programs are most notable in this case. These voluntary programs had expenditures of about \$2.35 billion for the period 1946-64 as compared to \$4.01 billion, almost twice as much, for the much shorter period of 1970-74.

Table I-1

UNITED NATIONS, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES,
SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND IAEA
PROGRAM EXPENDITURES,

1946-1974 (In thousands of dollars)

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Cumulative Total 1946-1964</u>	<u>Cumulative Total 1970-1974</u>
United Nations	\$1,071,400	\$1,081,600
FAO	149,000	236,100
IMCO	2,100	9,800
ICLO	69,800	55,000
Joint Financing Program	30,900	26,100
ILO	148,000	195,200
ITU	38,500	80,100
UNESCO	207,500	299,000
UPU	9,700	14,700
WHO	232,100	482,500
WMO	7,000	
Total UN Specialized Agencies & IAEA	\$2,006,200	\$2,591,600
UN Peacekeeping Forces	\$ 554,600	\$ 173,600
Selected Special Programs:		
IAEA Operational Program	11,100	16,900
UNICEF	434,200	316,900
UNDP	554,600	1,675,400
UN Research Institute for Social Development	100	3,700
UNEP	-0-	12,300
UNITAR	-0-	6,800
WHO Special Programs	22,900	33,900
WMO Voluntary Assistance	-0-	21,500
Total Special Programs	\$2,349,600	\$4,065,600

In the last eighteen years major UN programs have been created in numerous areas including, *inter alia*:

UN Conference on Trade and Development (1964);

UN Environment Programme (1972);

UN Development Programme (1965);

UN Industrial Development Organization (1965);

UN/FAO World Food Program (1961);
UN Institute for Training and Research (1965);
World Weather Watch (1963);
UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control (1970);
UN Fund for Population Activities (1967);
World Intellectual Property Organization (1967);
World Food Council (1974); and
International Fund for Agricultural Development (1976).

Even as harsh a critic of the operations of the political side of the UN system as Daniel Patrick Moynihan has written that

"There is no escape from a definition of nationhood which derives primarily from the new international reality. . . . World society matters and world organizations have evolved to the point where palpable interests are disposed in international forums to a degree without precedent. . . . The stakes are considerable. They are enormous." (Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The U.S. in Opposition," 59 *Commentary* 40-41 (March 1975).)

Much the same theme of resigned recognition of the operational role and impact of international programs can be found in the addresses of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly (1 September 1975) and to UNCTAD IV (6 May 1975). On this latter occasion, in the course of proposing approximately fifteen new UN programs, Kissinger noted that,

In the long sweep of history, the future of peace and progress may be most decisively determined by our response to the necessities imposed by our economic interdependence. This is the challenge which we have assembled here to address—the urgent need for co-operative solutions to the new global problems of the world economy. These issues dominate the agenda of the evolving relationship between North and South, the industrial and the developing countries.

We are in the midst of a fertile period of suggestions for expanded UN system activity. In addition to those flowing from the UN's own meetings, the private sector has in the last few years suggested a remarkable range of new operational activities for the UN system, including *inter alia*: new programs in food, economic development, and environment (Aspen Institute); an international science advisor (United Nations Association of the USA); global food reserves and additional multilateral assistance programs (the Overseas Development Council); primary commodity stock arrangements and new development assistance initiatives (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation); a world energy conference and an international energy foundation (Institute on Man and Science); an international seabed authority with responsibility for managing, for the benefit of all, the wealth of the oceans beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

While program expansion has clearly been the dominant theme of recent UN activity, signs of disquiet and concern with the operational record have begun to appear. For example, in his massive two-volume *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* (United Nations, Geneva, 1969), Sir Robert Jackson wrote,

The cumulative impact of this evidence, then, is to show that although the UN development system is delivering a valuable service, it is doing so under a greater strain than is acceptable, that the out-turn is less than optimal, and that the quality and quantity of future performance must be threatened. . . . What can be said with certitude is that the system is seriously overstrained at the present time and that, despite determined efforts from many quarters, there is no evidence that all defects are being overcome. There is, in short, a decline, and its proportions are becoming more serious. Major changes in organization and procedures are therefore imperative.

In addition to the range of difficulties that Sir Robert Jackson and others have pointed to, a different source of

concern about the UN system's operations has become apparent. The fundamental assumption behind much of the activity of the UN system has been that international cooperation on economic, social, and technological problems would lead to future cooperation in the political sphere. The fear has arisen in the last few years, however, that the functional and technical operations of the UN are becoming more and more politicized with the introduction of issues designed principally to attain political ends extraneous to the substantive and usually technical purposes of these programs. At times, as in the recent case of UNESCO, WHO and the ILO, the disruption resulting from the injection of such partisan political issues into the specialized agencies has been sufficiently severe to put into doubt the future of the agency.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the last five years the policy and role of the United States in the United Nations have received renewed attention. Attention has been drawn to clashes between the United States and the Third World over the shape of future economic relations and highly publicized anti-Israel actions by several UN organs. Recent U. S. Ambassadors to the UN, particularly Andrew Young and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, have found in the UN a highly visible position to articulate their views on international issues.

Perhaps because of the visibility of recent American spokesmen at the UN, it has become more apparent than otherwise that the UN system of the 1970s has changed, probably decisively, from the system of ten to fifteen years earlier. The United States since the mid-1960s has found itself frequently subjected in the UN system to actions, both symbolic and operational, by groups of states that seem to call into question the value of these institutions as instruments of international cooperation.

These actions include: increasingly aggressive challenges and opposition to Israeli legitimacy and politics, such as the equating of Zionism with racism, the recommendation that states halt economic aid to Israel, and action in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to exclude Israel from the European regional group; support for national liberation movements, including a call for the United States to grant full independence to Puerto Rico; demands for the redistribution of global economic wealth, culminating in a call for the establishment of a New International Economic Order and a Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States; a general conversion of UN forms into platforms for vitriolic rhetoric directed at the West in general and the United States specifically; the decision of the Carter administration to withdraw from the ILO; and such biased and unproductive negotiations at the UN Law of the Sea Conference that Ambassador Elliot Richardson recommended in 1978 that President Carter reevaluate whether the United States should continue to even participate in these negotiations.

For the United States, these actions have been particularly unsettling as they have come in institutions that were viewed as having their origin in American initiatives and reflecting the organized pluralistic nature of American society. It would have been impossible fifteen years ago for such consistent and broad-ranging attacks on United States policy and interests to gain majority support in the UN. The breadth and extent of this shift in United States fortunes account for the attitude of many who are now ready to write the UN off as a viable instrument for international cooperation.

The impact of these events and related developments is that the UN as an institution often seems to some Americans adrift from its own principles. Senator Ribicoff of Connecticut, after a year-long study of the UN system by the staff of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, concluded: "All too often the organizations headquartered in extravagant and luxurious surroundings, are ineffective,

top-heavy, with high-paid officials, underrepresented by United States personnel, uncertain in their purposes, and unduly repetitious of other organizations." Senator Ribicoff's views reflect a more general attitude of disillusionment and a belief that international institutions are proving more efficient at supporting their own bureaucracies than at advancing the goals and programs for which they were established.

Concern with these political developments has come to be called by Americans the "politicization" or "politicizing" of the UN. When this term is used carefully, which is often not the case, it denotes three closely related behavior patterns: first, considering and acting on matters that lie essentially outside the specific functional domain of a given specialized agency or program; secondly, the reaching of decisions on matters within an agency's or program's functional competence through a process that is essentially political and that does not reflect technical and scientific factors in the decision process; and thirdly, the taking of specific actions on issues within an agency's or program's competence for the sole purpose of expressing a partisan political position rather than attempting to reach an objective determination of the issues.¹ This concern with the "politicization" of the UN was one of the main themes of the Ribicoff Report prepared by the staff of the U. S. Senate Committee on Government Operations.²

Another major political development, and one that in part explains the political pressures that the United States has felt in these organizations, is the change in the composition and direction of most of the UN specialized agencies. The UN system in its origin was essentially a creation of Northern Hemisphere states. During its first fifteen to twenty years of existence the majority of issues that dominated its

1. For a different but essentially supporting set of definitions of "politicization" see Gene M. Lyons, David A. Baldwin and Donald W. McNemar, "The 'Politicization' Issue in the UN Specialized Agencies," in *The Changing United Nations: Options for the United States* 81-92 (David A. Kay ed. 1978).

2. United States Senate Committee on Government Operations, *U. S. Participation in International Organizations* 5-6 (1977).

agendas were the concerns of these same states. With the coming to independence in the 1960s of a large number of former colonies, both the membership and direction of the system began to change.³ The concerns of these developing regions, particularly the issues of decolonialization, South Africa's policy of apartheid, and economic assistance, were pushed to the forefront of the UN agenda. The same developing states have sought to increase their influence in the governing bodies of most UN agencies through an expansion and redistribution of membership of such seats. All of these changes have tended to put a sharp edge on the politics of the UN system.

This conflict of developing *vs.* developed country influence is heightened by the fact that financial support for the UN system still remains heavily the responsibility of the developed members. In 1977, for example, the United States contributed to UN programs approximately \$700 million both voluntary and assessed. This was more than the combined total contributed by 123 of the UN's 138 member states. As these budgets have increasingly gone to support economic development activities of the UN and as the developing countries have pressed for even higher budgets, it is not surprising that this issue has become a source of political conflict.

III. RESEARCH STRATEGY

As the events in the UN system described above unfolded, fears were often expressed for the future of the UN system. Debates in the General Assembly, UNESCO resolutions and clashes in ILO were highly publicized. Yet at the same time the system was in the midst of the unparalleled growth reflected in Table I-1. What was happening in the operational programs that were being carried out in over 100 states? These operational programs are of interest for several reasons. First, they represent a distinct move beyond the traditional functions of international organiza-

3. For a more extended treatment of this transition see David A. Kay, *The New Nations in the United Nations* (1970).