# World Security, Global Governance and the Role of UN

## *For a just, peaceful and sustainable world*

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## Introduction

The world security situation is more dangerous now than during the Cold War. Several recent developments are a testament to that. These are continuous violence in Iraq and Afghanistan, tension of a looming attack on Iran (dubbed as World War III) and terrorist organisations acquiring nuclear weapons are a few examples. The global warming and climate change crisis has put the planet in peril. Here we are talking of nothing less than the survival of the human race. If we sit still and take no action to mitigate the climate change crisis, we will have no planet to live.

In the backdrop of the above situation we will examine the wider implications of world security and the role of global governance and the United Nations for seeking a safer passage into this century.

## Global, Human and Collective security

We can define security broadly into three categories: Global, Human and Collective. We need to integrate all the three security challenges for achieving lasting peace.

Global security focuses on the security of territory and governments. States seldom shy away from deploying small arms, light weapons, threat of weapons of mass destruction to defend their borders and maintain the status quo.

Human security is concerned with the preservation of human life and their safety in a changing world. It is an alternative way of seeing the world because it challenges the basic precepts of military security. Instead it takes concepts like democracy, human rights, social equity and the elimination of poverty as essential elements of what constitute human security.

The concept of Collective security forms the bedrock of the United Nations Charter and has served the international community well for several decades. At its minimum, it requires a commitment to multilateralism and seeking the cooperation of the widest possible number of groups, institutions and civil society at large.

## World security and present day threats and challenges

The challenges are terrorism, climate change, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), globalisation (rich-poor divide), the recent increases in military spending, unilateral or pre-emptive attacks by powerful nations on sovereign states. All these need to be tackled for the maintenance of world security.

### Terrorism
The world and specially the US has identified (War on Terror) as its overriding priority and its occupation. The heightened state of alert in US and rest of the western world is causing endless problems including curbing civil liberties in US, UK and other parts of the world. War on terror has been used as a excuse for increased military spending in order to secure power and control. The recently

formed Counter Terrorism Council (CTC) by the UN is monitoring the worldwide terror networks and responding to them.

Climate change

The threat of global warming is so grave it has the potential of destroying our civilisation. The effects of climate change are already apparent with increased incidence of floods, storms, droughts, water shortage and rising sea levels; phenomena that is expected to grow in severity over the course of the century which is likely to hit the world's poorest the hardest. What the world needs is a global Marshall Plan in the form of a global treaty to mitigate and address the climate change crisis, other wise higher temperatures and rising sea levels will result in water and food shortages, conflicts, intense struggle for resources, gradual weakening of global institutions leading to the destruction of our planet in the end.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

The world is awash with 36,000 nuclear warheads worldwide and with millions of small arms in Africa and other parts of the globe. After USA's unilateralist military approach most countries in the world including the permanent 5 (P5) veto-wielding members of the Security Council-Britain, France, China, Russia and USA have increased defence spending for the first time after the Cold War. USA has proposals for a new missile defence shield and development of low-yield nuclear weapons, or so called mini nukes. The world, need to get rid of all military hardware for any lasting peace on earth.

Globalisation (rich-poor divide)

Around 2 Billion people throughout the world live in abject poverty on $1 a day while for the first time in the history we have the technology, know how and the means to feed them and also make them part of society instead of keeping them on the margins. Globalisation and World Trade Organisation (WTO) unjust trade policies have increased the social – economic divide leading to deprivation of millions of people in poor countries resulting in loss of jobs, opportunity, hope thus endangering security.

We believe that education is the key that unlocks the door to globalisation for the common good. We call in particular for approaches to education that nurture interreligious and intercultural understanding, awareness of interdependence, moral values, and global citizenship. These essential elements shape personal decisions of social consequence, concern for the well being of others, and respect for other human beings and for the whole of the planetary community.

Recent increases in military spending

A variety of factors are driving up military spending; terrorism, civil wars, border conflicts and modernisation of military hardware increasing risk of war. At present global military spending stands at over $1 trillion per year in contrast to $6 billion spent on basic education. This highlights the paradox of the world in which we spend more to destroy each other then to spend on peace, international cooperation, education and the eradication of poverty.

Unilateral or pre-emptive attacks by powerful nations on sovereign states

US in the absence of finding WMD's in Iraq, led an unilateral invasion without a explicit Security Council authorisation. Other countries like Iran and Syria are accused of having WMD's and are threatened with pre-emptive or unilateral strikes. The bigger question is that is there any grounds for

intervention for powerful countries to attack sovereign states on humanitarian, moral or any other reasons? Can an attack on another country be ever justified or stopped?

## **Pitfalls of world institutions**

Global governance system is composed of national governments, international organizations such as the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, transnational corporations, and technologically-driven arrangements such as the international currency exchange that govern and in many ways change the rules for governments. The mass media have created a "global theatre" that is also inescapably a part of this system.

Global governance is therefore extensive and multilayered; extensive because it can embrace pretty well any challenge facing the global community. The peoples of the world are becoming interconnected and interlinked and therefore mutually concerned. This can be climate change, human rights; the environment, operation of financial markets, or the health of national economies; it is a case of "what affects one can affect all."

A healthy form of global governance is that its implementation must be by popular consent, and yet it must also be consented to and implemented by nation-states. We need to understand that ideas and values are now as important a tool as economic might, in the effort to guarantee our security.

For example, there is a small self selected body that has become like one institution, the G8 (France, United Kingdom, Germany, USA, Japan, Italy Canada and Russia) initially concentrating on economic matters, now in a sense representative of the world community, and yet playing a powerful role in guiding the response to international challenges.

In a report by the Commission on Global Governance entitled, "Foundation for Global Governance" the Commission is of the belief that the world is now ready to accept a "global civic ethic" based on "a set of core values that can unite people of all cultural, political, religious, or philosophical backgrounds." This belief is reinforced by another belief: "that governance should be underpinned by democracy at all levels and ultimately by the rule of enforceable law."

The report continues, "We believe that all humanity could uphold the core values of respect for life, liberty, justice and equity, mutual respect, caring, and integrity." Similarly, the United Nations, World Bank and other international organizations, various regimes, coalitions of interested nations and individual nations when they act globally to address to various issues that emerge beyond national borders, such as development, the environment, human rights, infectious diseases and international terrorism are part of global governance.

However, the world institutions of today are slow to react and bureaucratic. They are in need of radical reforms if they are to be more effective and relevant to the present realities. The leaders and governments of the world are pursuing relentlessly their own national agenda to the detriment of the planet.

Clearly, our present system of global governance is very poorly equipped to handle the challenges of the global agenda. And it is not hard to see why. "Short-termism" prevails as our public and corporate leaders face an average tenure of less than five years. National interest dominates to the detriment of global interest in an antiquated system based on national sovereignty. Existing institutions tend to be compartmentalized with separate organizations for security, health, labour, environment and trade and are thus ill-equipped to address the interrelated challenges of the 21st century.

The United Nations and other international organisations reflect a previous world order which is out of step with today's challenges and priorities. The G8, the UN Security Council and other institutions require new approaches and structures to deal with the realities of the post-WWII world in which developing economies wield more influence and power.

The end of the Cold War, the expansion of the European Union and the rapid economic rise of developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and Mexico mean that the international organisations dealing with broad governance issues no longer include important players.

## Recommendations for Effective United Nations and Global Governance for tackling world security

The way forward for global institutions is to tackle new security threats by promoting disarmament, human rights, building a global rule of law and order. It also includes managing environmental degradation, emergencies and disasters, clash of religion and culture, unrestrained tide of globalisation. The implementation and completion of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be a top priority as gross inequities like poverty and lack of opportunity are fertile grounds for violence and terrorism. Most importantly the international community has the moral obligation and duty to control and intervene in countries if they are sliding into chaos, lawlessness, violence and unable to protect its citizens from rape, murder and killings. The recommendations are as follows:

- **We should find holistic solutions to all the interrelated issues and taking responsibility to deal collectively and have a multilateral approach in dealing with threats and challenges of today.** I suggest the concept of common security- peace, environment, social justice and environmental protection- reflects more accurately the purpose of the UN Charter, its treaties and conventions.

- **The international community need to link the agenda of development, environment and disarmament together by building partnerships at national and global level.** We can not have security amidst starvation and we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty and we cannot have either without a better environment. Only a peaceful society can work its way up to creating the institutions ripe for development and free itself from injustices and human rights abuses. The problems we face today- violent conflicts, destruction of nature, diseases, poverty and hunger etc are human created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding and goodness.

- **Unilateralist ambitions of major powers cannot solve global governance and world security problems.** The principle tools for bringing a non-violent world are dialogue, negotiation, compromise, taking into consideration not only the interest of the parties involved but concerns for the entire humanity.

- **The international community should work towards phasing the elimination of nuclear weapons.** For decades nuclear non-proliferation treaty has saved the world from extinction. We should ensure and cooperate with other countries to maintain the nuclear disarmament and restrict the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

  In the area of prevention of nuclear proliferation and to achieve a nuclear weapons free world, we should work on promoting measures such as comprehensive nuclear test an treaty, an end to the production of fissile material, further reduction in the nuclear stockpile, the establishment of numclear-weapons-free-zone, prevention of an arms race in outer space, and the abolition of nuclear weapons through a verifiable treaty or a package of treaties.

- **In a globalised world, where fundamentalism is rife, where there is a clash of culture and civilization, we need discussion and dialogue leading to inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony.** We have to work to strike a balance between religious and secular values and forge a unity in this fragmented world. We need respect and tolerance between religious and different groups of people to treat each other with dignity.  A dialogue and understanding among civilizations, cultures, and religions can pave a way for safer and brighter future.

- **In the sphere of aid, we need to fight against poverty and debt relief, work on doubling the aid for Africa, implementation of MDGs.** Also improving emergency fund for responding to disasters.

- **In the area of peace and security, the General Assembly to implement a comprehensive global counter-terrorism strategy, help build countries emerging from violence and conflicts and deal more objectively and credibly with human rights violations.**

- **We should to work for promoting democracy and multilateralism which paired with rule of law can deliver civil liberty, economic opportunity, and security which can change life in a positive way.**

- **We should strengthen democratic institutions and development of pluralistic media, increasing participation with civil society.**

- **We should reduce the global incidence of wars and military spending a new MDGs.** War retards development, but conversely development retards war. Around 50% of the conflicts of the past 20 years have reoccurred within five years of the peace agreements. Getting rid of war is not a utopian dream. There already exists in the world large regions for example, European

Union, within which war is inconceivable.

- **We should work towards using resources for peaceful and environmentally sustainable purposes.** At present the global arms trade, and its accompanying glut of military spending, continues to represent the single most significant perversion of worldwide priorities known today. For the sixth year military spending rose to the trillion dollar mark while billions of people who never see more than $1 or $2 a day are held hostage to unconscionable poverty.

- **We should make the 21$^{st}$ century about governments giving power to the people.** A united civil society should use its strength for stopping politicians using their power unilaterally in violation of law and international treaties.

## Conclusion

We need governments and institutions which are transparent, democratic, accountable and can work together with NGOs and civil society. With all its weaknesses and need for reform, the UN is one of the best world institution which has the clout, legitimacy and caliber to solve problems effectively on a world stage. All of these are problems that no one country, however powerful, can solve on its own and which are the shared responsibility of humankind.

The need for international cooperation has grown stronger, even as new rifts and divides have opened up. Solutions to current security concerns lie in policies that strengthen civilian, rather than military, institutions; policies that are preventative in nature, which address the root causes of insecurity; and policies that draw on the strengths and insights of different disciplines, transcending academic and bureaucratic boundaries. And this is UN's central role.

The UN uses diplomacy and dialogue among warring parties, pass resolutions and sanctions to cajole and shame countries and peacekeepers to resolve disputes. UN peacekeeping troops and personnel come from more than 110 countries which are sent to serve in many peacekeeping missions in places like Liberia, Sudan, Lebanon, and Haiti, contributing to peace and stability.

On a positive note, some of the successful examples of global governance can be listed as the newly formed International Criminal Court, Kyoto Protocol and MDGs where the governments of the world, NGOs and civil society have worked together certain common codes of conduct under which some of the challenges and threats including prosecution for crimes against humanity, protecting the environment and helping the poor to fight HIV AIDs and poverty can be implemented globally. The Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has made major contributions to global security and economic well being. It has been remarkably successful in achieving its main goals and -- with nearly 190 parties - has become the most widely-adhered to arms control treaty in history. The NPT is an indispensable tool in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Let me throw a few questions on the current global security issues which are relevant today.

- The deteriorating situation in Iraq and Afghanistan

- Current tensions with nuclear proliferation issues with Iran
- Human rights abuses in Darfur, Burma and other places
- How countries should act to mitigate climate change

The UN must therefore fit the international community in which it exists. The UN cannot expect to survive in the 21st century unless ordinary people throughout the world felt that it did something for them – helping to protect them against conflict, poverty, hunger, disease and the erosion of their natural environment. These are global governance issues that fall within the jurisdiction of the Organization. Although buffeted in recent months by allegations of mismanagement, corruption and other scandals, the United Nations remains an organization indispensable to the international community's ability to deal with global governance issues.

The role of UN and the goal of global governance is to promote peace and disarmament, protection of human rights and environment, rule of law, and development of the poorest regions of the world. If that can be put into action by leaders and global institutions then we stand a fair chance of solving the huge security problems of the 21st century.

Thank you very much for listening.

### Notes

1) Commission on Global Governance, 'Foundation of Global Governance.'
   To view report see http://www.libertymatters.org/globalgovernance.htm

2) For figures on global military expenditure see Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "Recent Trends in Military Expenditures"
   2004. http://web.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_trends.html

3) V Mehta, Revitalising global governance and democracy. Athens, Greece
   www.vmpeace.org