

BOOK REVIEW

THOMAS G. WEISS–DAVID P. FORSYTHE–ROGER A. COATE: **The United Nations and Changing World Politics**, 4th ed., Westview Press, Colorado–Oxford, 2004. lvi+373 p.

Our age, the post–post–Cold War era, seems to be the era of reevaluation from a number of aspects. Each branch of social sciences must reevaluate its concepts and insights, in harmony with the profound transformation of the social context. The emergence of globalization and its impetus on the traditional, mainly positivist and modern framework of assessment in social sciences has made it necessary to rethink all concepts, even though these concepts had already attained commonly shared and widely accepted interpretations. Additionally, the inner complexity of the phenomenon, authors mainly call globalization, has acutely raised the need for an interdisciplinary approach toward all contemporary problems. In these aspects, thus, different fields of social sciences had to cooperate effectively, in order to attain relevant achievements.

International public law regulating interstate relations had to face serious challenges during the last years. It is enough to mention Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, or the ‘human rights black hole’ of Guantanamo, whereas the case of US administration with the International Criminal Court can also serve as an example. Obviously, the political heart of the interstate system lies in the United Nations, so its functioning has often been under severe and comprehensive criticism, as if the UN would be responsible for all the international problems by itself. Therefore, the analysis of the current tendencies of development concerning the UN has a vital interest for all researchers–i. e. international analysts, global economists, as well as international lawyers–who work with a certain aspects of international relations.

The authors of this book–Thomas G. Weiss, professor and director of the Ralph Bruce Institute for International Studies at the City University of New York; David P. Forsythe, university professor of political science at the University of Nebraska; and Roger A. Coate, professor of international organization at the University of South Carolina–endeavored to comprehensively analyze the role of the UN in the contemporary global scene. The authors’ comprehensive work discusses all the core aspects of the UN’s functioning in detail. They

made a grand effort to reevaluate some sensitive questions and widely shared commonplaces in the light of the current international, or rather global conditions. That is why it is anticipated that this book would prove to be interesting also for lawyers, this being the foremost reason for it being analyzed in further detail.

The volume consists of three major parts and each of them is devoted to a single broad topic. Part One discusses in detail the main problems of international peace and security through three chapters. The first chapter analyzes the historical place of United Nations within the efforts of the 20th century—the Hague conferences, the League of Nations—trying to regulate interstate relations. Following this historical introduction the authors present the theoretical background of international security affairs focusing on the theory of collective security, as well as on its legal bases laid down by the UN Charter.

The next chapter is dedicated to the diverse UN security efforts during the Cold War. The authors briefly analyze the case-studies of Palestine, Korea, Suez and the Congo, then they sketch the main outline of the ‘traditional’ paradigm of peacekeeping. According to the authors’ position, five guiding principles can be formulated for all peacekeeping operations of this era: (i) consent is imperative before an operation begins, (ii) these operations need full support from the Security Council, (iii) participating countries need to provide troops and to accept risks, (iv) a clear and precise mandate is desirable, (v) peacekeeping units can use force only in self-defense and as a last resort. (p. 38–41.)

The new challenges that have arisen because of the end of the Cold War and the effects of the profound transformation of the whole international context are scrutinized in the third chapter of Part One. The authors often refer to the concept of humanitarian intervention, because it might become a new standard or a guideline for peacekeeping operations in place of the older, mostly interstate logic. This chapter reflects a quite realistic attitude toward peacekeeping, the authors argue that the “enthusiasm for UN helping hands must be tempered with the realities of UN operations.” (p. 83.) In sum, UN security operations seemed to be far from the ideal solution in the majority of the cases.

September 11 and its consequences on global security are the topic of the last chapter. So far international law has not been able to adequately answer the challenges of global terrorism, because there is lack of consensus among member states about the *per se* definition of terrorism. From the UN’s point of view the major problem of terrorism is its non-state nature, and because of this its handling seems to be quite difficult by an organization based on classical intergovernmental principles. Moreover, the emergence of the so-called Bush Doctrine that emphasizes a broad, from the aspect of international law unusual

notion of preemptive self-defense, has also not made much easier the settlement of the whole problem. Consequently the authors argue that it is indispensable to find a new balance of state sovereignty and need of multilateral conflict settlement in order to make the UN operations more effective and successful.

Part Two focuses on major issues related to human rights and humanitarian affairs. Its first chapter presents most of the major theoretical questions concerning human rights; it explores their historical origins including their different generations, it analyses their contribution to the system of international security, and it interprets the relevant articles of the UN Charter (Art. 1. and 55.), as well as lists all the human rights conventions until December 2002.

In the second chapter of Part Two the reader can find useful information about the whole UN human rights organizational structure. This complex system is comprised of a variety of offices and agencies that try to realize two types of strategies in general. Firstly, some of these bodies are engaged in supervising state policies in the light of human rights standards, while other bodies make efforts to promote, or to teach, new attitudes which might be beneficiary for the individuals. The authors analyze in detail, from the human rights perspective, the role of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Office of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Commission, while they only touch upon some supplementary bodies.

The last chapter of Part Two discusses some controversial problems of human rights protection. Inter alia the authors raise serious questions about the proliferation of human rights treaties and bodies or sub-bodies and their counterproductive effects (for instance, currently five different UN organs and many NGOs might be involved in torture issues). They analyze the influence of individual or coalitional state policies on human rights policies and they scrutinize the improving role of nongovernmental actors (NGOs). In sum they argue that states must learn that having a detailed transnational human rights system is an obvious advantage for them in our global age.

The last part of the book, Part Three, focuses on the global problems of development and the role of the UN in this process. In general, as the first chapter clarifies this broad problem, the promotion of social and economic development is a central issue of global security. It is obvious that the UN must attain a crucial role in the management of development problems due to its internationally comprehensive nature. Currently there is a consensus in the UN administration that human security endorsing the aim of sustainable development and respect for human rights, as the Millennium Summit pointed that out, is the highest priority on the tasklist of the UN. This chapter introduces

the historical formation of the concept of human security, and the cornerstones of this development process.

The next chapter, similarly to the relevant chapter of Part Two, firstly sketches the whole organizational structure responsible for the management of development issues. Neither this structure is too easy to survey, but the text guides the reader well into the world of development agencies. The second half of the chapter discusses the so called “Rio Process” and recent developments in this field. The authors emphasize that the sustainable human development model, forged out by the widely-known Human Development Reports, should be build on (i) a new partnership between state and market, (ii) new patterns of national and global governance and (iii) new forms of international cooperation. (p. 281.)

Lastly, in Part Three, the authors concentrate on the impact of globalization regarding development policies, as well as they present and evaluate the Millennium Goal Strategy. Quoting Kofi Annan’s position, they suggest that the major challenge for the UN is to find alternative strategies how to use the opportunities of globalization in order to help people better cope with the negative effects of globalization. (p. 289.) The Millennium Development Goals and Targets are aiming at, for instance, the eradication of extreme poverty or the assuring of an environmental sustainability, that may help governments and peoples to focus on the most crucial problems of southern hemisphere. It can only be anticipated that these targets will be successful or at least partially realized by 2015. In sum, the UN must further enhance its development activities in order to help the process of adjusting to the qualitatively new global challenges.

The three parts presented briefly above constitute the marrow of the volume. However, the book contains additional parts, too, which might also be interesting. The reader can find an introduction and a conclusion within which the authors formulate additional theses and, in some cases, their opinions. The introduction specializes on such basic questions as the nature of state sovereignty, the relationship among sovereignty and intergovernmental organizations, the impetus of the new global context on the traditional interpretations of *raison d’état* and the nature of UN politics. In the conclusion the authors formulate theses of conclusive nature using the prism of the volume, so they discuss the UN’s role in the articulation of interests, rule making and rule enforcement in the global scene through the evaluation of the relevant aspects of security, human rights and development issues. Lastly, they examine the future of interstate cooperation in the system of ‘global governance’ which is mostly determined by the proliferation of nonstate actors in global politics, the shifting location of authority to transnational or sub-national levels and the

accelerated pace and intensity of economic and social interactions. (p. 341.) Taking a modest, not maximalist but not at all minimalist position in the evaluation of the UN's successes and failures one can state that the UN can play a serious role in the settlement of the problems of our 'post-post-Cold War era'.

Additionally, the volume includes very useful appendixes; Appendix A shows the whole UN system in a table, Appendix B lists the most relevant websites related to the UN's work and Appendix C comprises the Charter of the United Nations. The book also has a nine page long list of acronyms which might be life-saving for the reader when she/he nearly gets lost in the literary soup of UN organizations. It should also be mentioned that the whole volume contains numerous figures, tables and photos which make it much more easy to understand relationships and problems.

In the preface the authors discuss their aims in detail. One of their major aims is to capture the essence of the UN as a political organization and show its aspects, for instance, security questions or international public law, through these political lens. Furthermore, they define other aims, too; i. e. they want to stress the importance of history, and they prefer to avoid the majority of the theoretical debates of social sciences via a non-theoretical approach. According to the impressions of the reviewer these guiding principles were the best choices because by using them the authors avoided lots of intrinsic and structural problems. Skepticism in theories and emphasis on history when one discusses such a complex issue as the UN is in itself is indispensable, because reality is much richer than the theories can ever be. Only history can guide us adequately in these affairs. So, this history-oriented, non-theoretical approach is one the major advantages of the book. On the basis of these principles, the authors present such a comprehensive and comprehensible manual, that proves to be very useful for students, but is quite promising for researchers at the same time.

It must be recognized, that the authors, stemming mainly from the above presented epistemological conservatism, reflect a realist attitude toward the entire UN (in their words: "we are not card-carrying members of the UN fan club" p. xxiii). They accept that the outcome of UN policies depend essentially on the individual state foreign policies (p. 344.), and they point out the weaknesses of the UN system many times. So, they do not at all think that the UN is the best solution for all international problems, but as for now, there is no better way. So they represent that way of thought what was emphasized by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld: "The purpose of the UN is not to get us to heaven but to save us from hell." (p. 345.) This statement is the key for understanding the whole attitude of the volume.

Lastly, the authors declare in the preface that their book has two purposes, first, it may be a coursebook for college courses on international organization and the United Nations, secondly, it might be supplemental reading for other fields of study, like, for instance, international law. (p. xxv.) The reviewer can easily affirm that the book adequately serves the second purpose. According to the opinion of the reviewer the volume has its own place on the bookshelves of all researchers whose studies touch upon, from any aspects, international relations.

Balázs Fekete