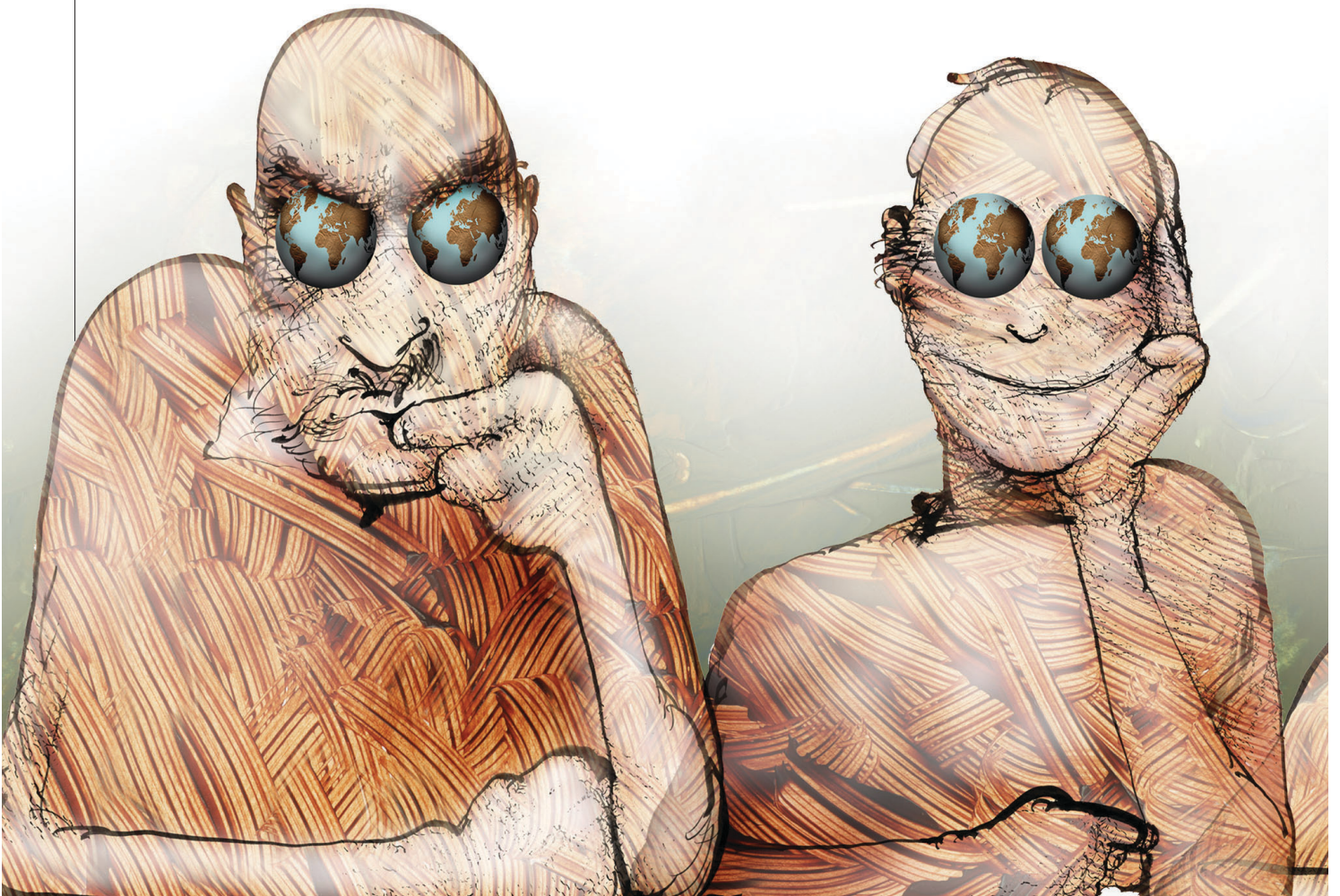


What is the International Community?



We are supported by the collective will of the world,” declared U.S.

President George W. Bush as he launched the war against Afghanistan’s Taliban regime in October 2001. For many people, that collective will has a name: the “international community.” This feel-good phrase evokes a benevolent, omniscient entity that makes decisions and takes action for the benefit of all countries and peoples. But invoking the international community is a lot easier than defining it. FOREIGN POLICY invited nine notable thinkers, activists, journalists, and policymakers from across the ideological spectrum to survey the international community and tell us what they see. Does such a community truly exist? If so, who is part of it? Who isn’t? Whose values does it reflect? And perhaps most important, how does it work? How should it work?



PROBLEMS WITHOUT PASSPORTS

By Kofi A. Annan

Ours is a world in which no individual, and no country, exists in isolation. All of us live simultaneously in our own communities and in the world at large. Peoples and cultures are increasingly hybrid. The same icons, whether on a movie screen or a computer screen, are recognizable from Berlin to Bangalore. We are all consumers in the same global economy. We are all influenced by the same tides of political, social, and technological change. Pollution, organized crime, and the proliferation of deadly weapons likewise show little regard for the niceties of borders; they are problems without passports and, as such, our common enemy. We are connected, wired, interdependent.

Such connections are nothing new. Human beings have interacted across planet Earth for centuries. But today's globalization is different. It is happening more rapidly. It is driven by new engines, such as the Internet. And it is governed by different rules, or in too many cases, by no rules at all. Globalization is bringing more choices and new opportunities for prosperity. It is making us more familiar with global diversity. However, millions of people around the world experience globalization not as an agent of progress but as a disruptive force, almost hurricane-like in its ability to destroy lives, jobs, and traditions. Many have an urge to resist the process and take refuge in the illusory comforts of nationalism, fundamentalism, or other isms.

Faced with the potential good of globalization as well as its risks, faced with the persistence of deadly conflicts in which civilians are primary targets, and faced with the pervasiveness of poverty and injustice, we must identify areas where collective action is needed—and then take that action to safeguard the common, global interest. Local communities have

fire departments, municipal services, and town councils. Nations have legislatures and judicial bodies. But in today's globalized world, the institutions and mechanisms available for global action, not to mention a general sense of a shared global fate, are hardly more than embryonic. It is high time we gave more concrete meaning to the idea of the international community.

What makes a community? What binds it together? For some it is faith. For others it is the defense of an idea, such as democracy. Some communities are homogeneous, others multicultural. Some are small as schools and villages, others as large as continents.

Today, of course, more and more communities are virtual, as people, even in the remotest locations on earth, discover and promote their shared values through the latest communications and information technologies.

But what binds us into an international community? In the broadest sense, there is a shared vision of a better world

for all people as set out, for example, in the founding charter of the United Nations. There is a sense of common vulnerability in the face of global warming and the threat posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction. There is the framework of international law, treaties, and human rights conventions. There is equally a sense of shared opportunity, which is why we build common markets and joint institutions such as the United Nations. Together, we are stronger.

Some people say the international community is only a fiction. Others believe it is too elastic a concept to have any real meaning. Still others claim it is a mere vehicle of convenience, to be trotted out only in emergencies or when a scapegoat for inaction is needed. Some maintain there are no internationally recognized norms, goals, or fears on which to base such a community. Op-ed pages and news reports refer routinely to the “so-called interna-

“The institutions and mechanisms available for global action, not to mention a general sense of a shared global fate, are hardly more than embryonic.”

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tional community,” as if the term does not yet have the solidity of actual fact. I believe these skeptics are wrong. The international community does exist. It has an address. It has achievements to its credit. And more and more, it is developing a conscience.

When governments, urged by civil society, work together to realize the long-held dream of an International Criminal Court for the prosecution of genocide and the most heinous crimes against humanity, that is the international community at work for the rule of law. When an outpouring of international aid flows to victims of earthquakes and other disasters, that is the international community following its humanitarian impulse. When rich countries pledge to open more of their markets to poor-country goods and decide to reverse the decade-long decline in official development assistance, that is the international community throwing its weight behind the cause of development. When countries contribute troops to police cease-fire lines or to provide security in states that have collapsed or succumbed to civil war, that is the international community at work for collective security.

Examples abound of the international community

at work, from Afghanistan and East Timor to Africa and Central America. At the same time, there are important caveats. Too often the international community fails to do what is needed. It failed to prevent genocide in Rwanda. For too long it reacted with weakness and hesitation to the horror of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. The international community has not done enough to help Africa at a time when Africa needs it most and stands to benefit most. And in a world of unprecedented wealth, the international community allows nearly half of all humanity to subsist on \$2 or less a day.

For much of the 20th century, the international system was based on division and hard calculations of realpolitik. In the new century, the international community can and must do better. I do not suggest that an era of complete harmony is within reach. Interests and ideas will always clash. But the world can improve on the last century's dismal record. The international community is a work in progress. Many strands of cooperation have asserted themselves over the years. We must now stitch them into a strong fabric of community—of international community for an international era.

THE POWER OF TWO

By Andrew Gowers

It's one of those phrases that trips lightly off the editorial writer's keyboard: "The international community should consider...." "The international community should act...." But the phrase more often obscures than illuminates. It allows *bien-pensants* everywhere to propose optimal imaginary courses of action for the betterment of humankind to hypothetical enlightened actors. And the phrase makes it easy to avoid hard thinking about who might act, out of what motive, and to what effect. Its use, incidentally, is banned from the editorial columns of the *Financial Times*.

It is, nonetheless, a legitimate exercise to ask what lies behind the cliché. Why is it trotted out every time people ask themselves what is to be done in some conflict-torn or poverty-ridden corner of the earth? Is there an overarching international community—in terms of values, interests, or will—to which those suffering the ills of the modern global market can appeal, with some hope of constructive response?

At the most visceral level, I can name one such community that has asserted itself in recent years: the community of international opinion, generated by modern communications and the media images it can instantaneously transmit around the globe. As the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw recently expressed, technology has created a sense of "one world, a global community." And without the vivid, public focus on faraway crises that this community can engender, it is hard to imagine that Western governments would have intervened in regional conflicts such as those in the former Yugoslavia.

Still, that definition remains fuzzy. It does not, for instance, explain with any precision how such interventions come about. And it does not directly touch the real actors and principles—the states and institutions—through which international affairs are conducted.

"The true international community—the one whose health and togetherness will determine the course of world events—is ... essentially, the United States and Europe."

Perhaps then, the germ of true international community—the holy grail of "global governance" that so often rears its head in academic debates and at gatherings of the great and good—exists in current institutions and rules? Up to a point. The Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and their lost cousin, the World Trade Organization, have created likely the closest thing to a set of rules governing the world economy. The United

Nations, for all its faults and failures, remains a rules-based community of states in miniature. International law remains on the march, adding treaties and institutions to express the community's newest priorities and passions, from the fight against global warming to the outlawing of biological weapons to the pursuit and prosecution of tyrants.

This system amounts to a powerful machinery through which widely held and in some cases novel community values can be expressed. It is the intellectual backdrop against which today's liberal internationalists—people like British Prime Minister Tony Blair—set out their idealistic-sounding stall. It allows Straw, for example, to posit "four principles ... to underpin the modern idea of global community," a system in which nations have global rights and obligations and in which the community has the right and duty to intervene in conflicts between and within states.

But this definition remains inadequate. The rules, for example, do not exist in isolation. They express the will of powerful international actors; they reflect hard bargains driven between players—mainly states—with coinciding or complementary interests. The institutions require the active engagement of those states and a constant sense that the institutions still serve their governments' political self-interest.

By now, it is surely obvious about whom we are really talking. The true international community—the one whose health and togetherness will determine the course of world events—is the group of states that

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created the rules and institutions in the first place. It is, essentially, the United States and Europe.

It was the United States and Europe, working together after the last world war, that created the conditions for peace and growing prosperity in the ensuing five decades. It was their creation of NATO that contained the Soviet menace and brought security to the troubled European continent. It was their leadership of succeeding global trade rounds that spurred economic growth around the world, lifted millions from poverty, and helped capitalism overwhelm state socialism. And it was their common action at the end of the Cold War that maintained trans-Atlantic order and opened the way for expanded opportunity and stability to the east.

Of course, the world does not turn purely on a trans-Atlantic axis. But communities need leadership and values, and the international community of the last 50 years was created through the leadership and governed by the common values of the United States and Europe.

And how does that community stand today, more than a decade after the demise of the common enemy? It is in trouble—deeper trouble than the leaders of the community seem prepared to admit. The commonality of views that bound the United States and Europe together is fading. Since September 11, 2001, after a

brief flurry of togetherness, they have been unmistakably drifting apart. The sense of a terrorist threat has initiated a profound transformation in U.S. foreign policy, but one that Europeans do not share and do not begin to understand. This misunderstanding is mutual. It affects all aspects of international relations, from mediation (or the lack of it) in the Middle East to cooperation (or the lack of it) in defense and from disruptions of trans-Atlantic trade to policy on weapons of mass destruction.

This state of affairs contains a hideous irony. There has never been a greater need for an international community than in the months since international terrorism exploded on New York and Washington. The calls for action to solve the problems of poverty and conflict have never been louder. But at this moment of greatest need, the twin pillars of the international community seem less able and likely than at any time in recent decades to act together.

The editorial writers and opinion formers would do well to set aside their appeals to an abstract international community and focus instead on the practical task of bringing the United States and Europe back to a shared global understanding. Without such an understanding, the “international community” will lose its last vestiges of meaning, as well as its capacity to act.

THE CRIMES OF 'INTCOM'

By Noam Chomsky

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein advised readers to attend to the use of a phrase in order to determine its meaning. Adopting that suggestion, one regularly discovers that terms of political discourse are used with a doctrinal meaning that is crucially different from the literal one. The term "terrorism," for example, is not used in accord with the official definition but is restricted to terrorism (as officially defined) carried out by them against us and our clients. Similar conventions hold for "war crime," "defense," "peace process," and other standard terms.

One such term is "the international community." The literal sense is reasonably clear; the U.N. General Assembly, or a substantial majority of it, is a fair first approximation. But the term is regularly used in a technical sense to describe the United States joined by some allies and clients. (Henceforth, I will use the term "Intcom," in this technical sense.) Accordingly, it is a logical impossibility for the United States to defy the international community. These conventions are illustrated well enough by cases of current concern.

One does not read that for 25 years the United States has barred the efforts of the international community to achieve a diplomatic settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict along the lines repeated, in essence, in the Saudi proposal adopted by the Arab League in March 2002. That initiative has been widely acclaimed as a historic opportunity that can only be realized if

"One does not read that the United States defies the international community on terrorism, even though it voted virtually alone...against a U.N. resolution in December 1987 harshly condemning this plague of the modern age."

Arab states agree at last to accept the existence of Israel. In fact, Arab states (along with the Palestine Liberation Organization) have repeatedly done so since January 1976, when they joined the rest of the world in backing a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a political settlement based on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories with "appropriate arrangements ... to guarantee ... the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all

states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders"—in effect, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 expanded to include a Palestinian state. The United States vetoed the resolution. Since then, Washington has regularly blocked similar initiatives. A majority of Americans support the political settlement reiterated in the Saudi plan. Yet it does not follow that Washington is defying the international community or domestic opinion.

Under prevailing conventions, that cannot be since, by definition, the U.S. government cannot defy Intcom, and as a democratic state, it naturally heeds domestic opinion.

Similarly, one does not read that the United States defies the international community on terrorism, even though it voted virtually alone (with Israel; Honduras alone abstaining) against the major U.N. resolution in December 1987 harshly condemning this plague of the modern age and calling on all states to eradicate it. The reasons are instructive and highly relevant today. But all of that has disappeared from history, as is customary when Intcom opposes the international community (in the literal sense).

At the time, Washington was undermining Latin American efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement in Central America and had been condemned for international terrorism by the International Court of Justice, which ordered the United States to terminate such crimes. The U.S. response was escalation. Again,

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none of this history nor similar episodes since bear on Intcom's attitude toward terrorism.

Occasionally, Intcom's isolation is noticed, leading to perplexed inquiries into the psychic maladies of the world. Richard Bernstein's January 1984 *New York Times Magazine* article "The U.N. versus the U.S." (not the converse) is an apt example. Further evidence that the world is out of step is that after the early years of the United Nations, when Washington's writ was law, the United States has been far in the lead in vetoing Security Council resolutions, with Great Britain second and the Soviet Union (later Russia) a distant third. The record in the General Assembly is similar—but no conclusions follow about the international community.

A major contemporary theme is the normative revolution that Intcom allegedly underwent in the 1990s, at last accepting its duty of humanitarian intervention to end terrible crimes. But one never reads that the international community "reject[s] the so-called 'right' of humanitarian intervention" along with other forms of coercion that it perceives as traditional imperialism in a new guise, particularly the version of economic integration called globalization in Western doctrine. Such conclusions were elaborated in the declaration of the South Summit in April 2000, the first meeting of the heads of state of the G-77 (the descendant of the former non-aligned countries), which accounts for nearly 80 percent of the world's population. The declaration merited a few disparaging words in elite media.

The 1990s are widely considered the decade of humanitarian intervention, not the 1970s, even though the latter decade was bounded by the two most significant cases of intervention to terminate horrendous crimes: India in East Pakistan and Vietnam in Cambodia. The reason is clear. Intcom did not carry out these interventions. In fact, it bitterly opposed them, imposing sanctions and making threatening gestures toward India and harshly punishing Vietnam for the crime of terminating Pol Pot's atrocities as they were peaking. In contrast, the U.S.-



led bombing of Serbia stands as the great moment of the new international enlightenment—no matter that such action was strongly opposed by India, China, and much of the rest of the world. Here is not the place to review the humanitarian intervention undertaken to preserve Intcom's "credibility" and, for public relations purposes, to terminate the crimes that it precipitated. Nor is this the place to examine Intcom's refusal to withdraw from its long-standing participation in comparable or worse crimes and what that implies about Intcom's operative values.

Such topics do not enter the extensive literature on the responsibilities of the self-declared enlightened states. Instead, there is a highly regarded literary genre inquiring into the cultural defect of Intcom that keeps it from responding properly to the crimes of others. An interesting question no doubt, though by any reasonable measure it ranks well below a different one that remains unasked: Why does Intcom persist in its own substantial crimes, either directly or through crucial support for murderous clients?

It is all too easy for me to continue, though it should be recognized that such practices are no innovation of Intcom. They are close to historical universals, including analogues that are not pleasant to recall.

THE SHACKLES OF CONSENSUS

By Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

By the time the Cold War ended, key players of the United States' foreign policy elite had developed a habit of intervention in the affairs of other states and a confidence in their own ability to manage the world's affairs. These political elites believed the world was on the edge of truly major changes, and they thought they knew what the future would and should look like.

Key members of the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations brought with them to the White House a world view that was global, egalitarian, redistributionist, and multinational in new ways. They brought the same views to their participation in the "international community." Most Americans still do not fully understand the implications and consequences of multilateral decision making. The multilateral approach has not only procedural consequences but also important substantive consequences because it redistributes power and affects the accountability of decision makers and the culture in which they take action.

To have power, political scientist Harold Lasswell wrote, is to be taken into account in the policies of others. In multilateral assemblies, affluent states (such as those in the G-8) submit themselves to unfamiliar egalitarian constraints. These states not only agree to consider the views and interests of small, less developed states but also often agree to be bound by majorities of small states, such as the majority that determines outcomes in the U.N. General Assembly.

Multilateral organizations achieve more equal distribution of power by adopting rules such as those of the U.N. General Assembly or the World Trade

Organization, which operate on the principle of "one government, one vote" regardless of the character, size, population, achievement, productivity, technological advancement, representativeness, or responsibility of individual member states. Traditional socialists and old-style Marxists believe that social justice requires a more egalitarian redistribution of wealth—from the haves to the have-nots. New-style multilateralists believe political justice requires the redistribution of power as well—from the haves to the have-nots.

Former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote that he not only supported democracy for all countries but also hoped to move the world toward the "democratization" of international relations by empowering the weakest states and diminishing the power of the most powerful. This effort would require, inter alia, redistributing power within the U.N. Security Council.

But would the five permanent members of the Security Council—the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and France—accept such a redistribution in U.N. policymaking? Would they accept a redistribution of power that would reduce the influence of their countries to that of, say, Nepal, Mexico, Liberia, or the Bahamas?

How far could an egalitarian redistribution move forward before being stopped by the permanent members?

This kind of global "democratization" would in fact mean less democracy because there is no way to make multilateral decision makers accountable to those they "represent," as happens in national democracies. Indeed, problems of representation and accountability are the most important obstacle to a more egalitarian distribution of power on a global scale. The British, for instance, have called the inaccessibility of decision makers in the European Union a "democratic deficit." In effect, multilateral decision making increases the cultural, political, and geographical distance between those who choose decision makers, those who make decisions, and those affected by these

"Building and maintaining a consensus may become the focus of attention in multilateral arenas, displacing the substantive decision that the consensus serves."

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decisions. Abstract relations cannot produce the same solidarity among people as common identifications, education, and experience. The democratic institutions that make and keep decision makers representative and accountable are national, as are the cultures on which they rest.

The officials of multilateral organizations are not elected by a popular vote. Often they are not even chosen by elected officials. Multilateral institutions do not merely add another layer of bureaucracy between rule makers and those who live under their rules; these institutions create wholly new jurisdictions that do not coincide with existing institutions—based on nation-states—that provide democratic accountability. Voters can rarely “throw the rascals out” when the rascals hail from 200 countries scattered around the globe.

Multilateral decisions to use force—such as U.S. decisions to participate in U.N. peacekeeping—often escape oversight and/or control of either the U.S. Congress or electorate. No voter from any country has the capacity to determine the decisions of the U.N. Security Council or to hold a Security Council member

accountable. This lack of representation and accountability afflicts all multilateral arenas and actors and has loomed large in debates on multinational organizations and global initiatives—such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Law of the Sea, the Kyoto Protocol, and the International Criminal Court.

The need to maintain a consensus in multilateral arenas often forces the powerful to make concessions they would not otherwise offer. Building and maintaining a consensus may become the focus of attention in multilateral arenas, displacing the substantive decision that the consensus serves. A commitment to multilateral decision making thus renders it extremely difficult for actors to make decisions with dispatch, as the possibility of rapid reaction becomes tangled in bureaucratic red tape and groupthink dominates the problem-solving process.

The irony is that collective action and collective security do not necessarily require multilateral action. Peacekeeping, for example, does not require decision making by countries beyond the participants in the conflict. Indeed, those who need defending are more vulnerable to the delays and ineffectiveness of a multilateral team than are those who are attacking; aggressors are not required to coordinate their actions and policies with anyone. But even in matters of life and death, multilateralism wrests the problem of survival away from those most directly and intensely concerned and assigns it to others. Recall how the U.N. Security Council imposed an arms embargo that effectively denied Bosnians the capacity to defend themselves, even though no one else was so ardently interested in defending Bosnians or had as much at stake in doing so. Similarly, no one has as great a stake as Israelis in the various anti-Israel and anti-Zionist actions that are common in U.N. bodies.

Ultimately, the result of multilateral processes is often war by committee and peace by committee. Neither works very well.

THE LIMITS OF LOYALTY

By J. Bryan Hehir

Some critics of the “international community” stress the lack of institutional structure and political consensus needed to bring the concept to life. Others assert that, as a practical matter, the international community doesn’t exist at all. But such critiques miss the point. The international community is important and valid primarily as a moral concept that in turn can shape institutions and inform policy choices. Perhaps this moral meaning is better expressed in the notion of a “human community,” which exists prior to the sovereign state and is a more appropriate point of reference for analyzing world politics. The moral reality of the international community is rooted in a shared human nature, and its normative imperative is one of solidarity—a conscious conviction that common humanity sustains a minimal number of moral obligations across cultures, national boundaries, and geographical distances.

The basic conviction that such obligations exist and can be specified instructs the human conscience on the limits of loyalty that one can pledge to a sovereign state. The state, for instance, cannot obliterate (or ask individuals to violate or ignore) preexisting moral duties. Of course, the content and scope of a charter of rights and duties remains a continuing source of debate even with the human rights texts of the United Nations in hand. But agreement on one catalog of rights and duties is less significant than the prior assertion that a community of moral actors indeed undergirds the ebb and flow of world politics.

Within individual nation-states, the moral fabric of rights and duties among citizens is given visibility and authority by institutions, laws, and policies. Though civil law never captures the full range

of moral relationships, it specifies some rights and duties and enforces them with coercive power. The laws and institutions in the international arena are qualitatively weaker than in domestic society. Yet during the last half of the 20th century, the institutional architecture of the international community developed and matured, primarily through the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the emergence of regional and global human rights regimes. The concept of the international community, therefore, is not purely a normative or moral ideal. It has been given shape and structure above and beyond the role of the sovereign state that for centuries has been the principal unit of authority and action in international relations.

The crucial issue, of course, is not the mere existence or growth of international organizations but their capacity to enhance, organize, and manage the life of the international community. This statement presupposes the continued primacy of the sovereign state yet also acknowledges that much of international politics today involves challenges that no nation-state can address alone. The end of the Cold War raised expectations about the potential of international institutions to contribute to the welfare of the international community. But the 1990s highlighted two challenges for international bodies: effectiveness and legitimacy.

History will record the 1990s as the decade of globalization and genocide. As analysts including Yale University’s John Lewis Gaddis and Harvard University’s Stanley Hoffmann have observed, the post-Cold War world has manifested both increasing integration and deep fragmentation. Globalization exemplifies the dynamic of integration—between cultures, among economies, and through communication and travel. The event of genocide, vividly on display in the 1990s, exemplified fragmentation within and among states, as large, capable actors chose to ignore the facts on the ground.

“[The international community’s] moral meaning is better expressed in the notion of a ‘human community,’ which exists prior to the sovereign state.”

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At the beginning of this new century, the international community still lacks institutions adequate to confront either integration or fragmentation.

The challenge of fragmentation underscores the ineffectiveness of international organizations. The United Nations is the obvious body through which the world should debate, decide, and confront the question of military intervention to prevent genocide (or its related manifestations such as ethnic cleansing). But the 1990s tragically demonstrated the inability of the United Nations to act as the primary agent in addressing these crises. The major states remain the effective repository of response, and the 1990s showed their response to be largely indecisive, tardy, and limited.

Meanwhile, international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund confront the test of legitimacy as they grapple with the multidimensional reality of globalization. Legitimacy in this context implies a shared international conviction that the policies and programs affecting individual nations proceed from international institutions that represent the perspectives and interests of all member states. Yet many states and civil society actors in the Southern Hemisphere believe that key multilateral bodies—which are needed as mediators of conflicting interests and disparities of power—act as agents of the foreign policies of major states. This belief should not lead to the conclusion that these institutions are dispensable but to the discussion of how they might play their role with greater credibility across the spectrum of states and peoples.

The gap between the moral requirements of fashioning a true international community—promoting security, peace, economic justice, and human rights—and the current institutional inadequacies of that community establish the matrix of political choice for states and other participants in the community. In particular, the moral demands of creating a truly international community highlight a double challenge for states. The substantive challenge is the way states conceive the relationship of vital interests and national interests. The vital interest of states usually involves their basic, self-interested concerns for security and prosperity. But vital interests should not exhaust the national interest; both the values that states hold and the needs of others compel states to define national interest in light of a broader global interest. No student of world politics will underestimate the difficulty of persuading states to endorse this broader view. But this challenge is precisely where the moral meaning of the international community has significance for the policy choices of states.

Finally, the procedural challenge for states is to recognize the role of other crucial actors in the international community and to conceive of policy in collaboration with them. The two key groups here are the yet underdeveloped international institutions and non-governmental organizations that now permeate both the security and economic dimensions of world politics. Ultimately, a broader substantive conception of national interest will require a more creative strategic relationship for states with these other forces.

GUILTY PARTIES

By Sadako Ogata

Those of us thinking about global public policy have brooded over the meaning of the term “international community.” Personally, I avoid invoking it because the term seems too amorphous both conceptually and in practice. And yet I find it widely used as if it represents a reality that no one dares question. But does the international community actually exist? If so, what does it really represent?

It seems clear that the term does not stand for any specific geographic area or population group.

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Arguably, the United Nations—the most universal international organization with 190 member states—is the closest embodiment of the international community. True, when the United Nations aspires to eradicate poverty, promote disarmament, or protect the environment, its efforts are often perceived as expressing the position or wishes of the international community. In this sense, when a multilateral agency pursues what might be widely considered as the common good, such an effort tends to be enshrined in international community terms. As a concept, then, the international community comes to life more on account of the substance to which it aspires rather than the entity it represents.

An alternative view of the international community relates to the policy impetus the term can provide. Since the concept assumes positive efforts toward some widely held objectives, the challenge for policymakers is to turn specific causes into generally accepted goals. Very often, international conferences attempt to force compromises in the name of some vague consensus. (Recall the Monterrey Consensus document that followed from the March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico.) At the end of such gatherings, leaders then can claim success in the name of the international community.

Consider, too, the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Following the shock of the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings and the Pentagon and the widespread sympathy over the victims, a vast range of states supported U.S. military action. One might even say that the international community joined in the war against terrorism. However, as the war has continued, questions have emerged: Is this war not really an American war? Is the execution of the war not violating aspects of international humanitarian law? More such distinctions, nuances, and arguments have emerged as analysis of the war effort has deepened. The world's understanding of the conflict may have become more accurate, but the international community consensus in favor of the effort has become weaker. A new rationale and a new impetus would be necessary to pursue the original war on terrorism.

In my decade (1991–2000) as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, my constant goal was to build global consensus for the protection of refugees—that is, of those individuals fleeing religious, ethnic, or political persecution at the hands of their

own states or by groups engaged in internal conflicts. The principle of refugee protection is enshrined in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which entered into force in 1954. Although the number of signatories to the convention increased from 104 when I took office to 141 today, I nonetheless faced great difficulties seeking to ensure that states lived up to the provisions of the convention, even regarding the acceptance of people in desperate flight.

I sought to enlist governments and the global public for support in my efforts, insisting that borders be kept open, asking that asylum seekers' claims be fairly examined, and soliciting funds to cover victims' needs. But obtaining a positive response was never easy. The international community did not seem to exist even in the face of human tragedies. Indeed, this community only emerged when human crises hit the international media, when scenes of misery—whether involving the Kurds, the Rwandans, or the Kosovars—flashed

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across living room television screens in the developed world. Such episodes taught me the crucial role of the media in transforming specific humanitarian causes to more generally shared concerns.

Ultimately, the international community does exist, but only as a potential source of power, to promote common cause or legitimize common action.

It is essentially a virtual community. However, the international community can be brought to life in response to vital callings, with conscious or unconscious inputs. It thus represents a useful conceptual tool that political leaders, activists, and the media can deploy to move policy thinking closer to what might be construed as the common good. Why not, then, mobilize greater efforts for building the real international community?



BATTLING BARBARISM

By Walden Bello

A global community is in the making, but it does not consist of desocialized atoms orbiting around impersonal markets, as in the vision of Adam Smith and Margaret Thatcher. Neither is it the false community composed of an inchoate global majority and organized ruling elites—which is actually what the ideologues of the establishment have in mind when they speak of the “international community.” The new community in the making comprises many communities tied by common interests and values, but its social expression is inflected by different histories and cultures. In such a world, as British philosopher John Gray puts it, international institutions must exist to “express and protect local and national cultures by embodying and sheltering their distinctive practices.”

This new community has emerged in response to the overreach of global capitalism. By the mid-1990s, the world was witnessing growing poverty, increasing inequality, and the institutionalization of economic stagnation in those scores of developing countries that had faithfully followed the tenets of structural adjustment. The number of people living on less than \$2 a day rose by more than 80 million between 1990 and 1998. But such realities were lost amid the triumphalism accompanying the collapse of the socialist economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Only with the subsequent financial crises in Asia did the global elite finally recognize these dismal trends. With 1 million people in Thailand and some 20 million in Indonesia suddenly plunging below the poverty line, the Asian collapse triggered a reexamination

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of the record of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s throughout the developing world.

Previously scattered and disorganized, social resistance to corporate-driven globalization came together in increasingly large demonstrations in the late 1990s. In December 1999, massive street mobi-

lizations brought about the collapse of the World Trade Organization’s meeting in Seattle—dealing pro-globalization forces their second significant reversal after the Asian crisis.

By the beginning of the 21st century, global capitalism was suffering a full-blown legitimacy crisis. That is, increasing numbers of people no longer saw its key institutions—

including the multilateral financial and trade system, transnational corporations, the political system of liberal democracy, and the protective cover of U.S. military hegemony—as legitimate or credible. Even before the eruption of the Enron scandal, 72 percent of Americans agreed that business had too much power over their lives, according to a *Business Week* survey. Since then, the unending stream of Wall Street scandals has shown that doctrinal deregulation ends in massive corporate corruption, and the collapse of the Argentine economy warned developing countries against taking seriously the IMF creed of liberalization and globalization. Moreover, following September 11, 2001, U.S. calls on the world to join the antiterrorist crusade have been met with widespread skepticism throughout the South. Promoted as the project of a global antiterrorist coalition, the invasion of Afghanistan to topple the Taliban instead came across as a colonial expedition launched by the Anglo-American brotherhood.

These events have shattered the illusion of a community of interests between the promoters of corporate-driven globalization and the people of the world. In its place, a new community of interests has emerged, manifested most clearly in the Porto Alegre process.

The site of the World Social Forum in 2001 and 2002, the medium-sized Brazilian city of Porto Alegre has become a byword for the spirit of this burgeoning global community. Galvanized by the slogan “another world is possible,” some 50,000 people flocked to this coastal city from January 31 to February 5, 2002—more than three times the number attending in 2001. The pilgrims included Indian fisherfolk, Thai farmers, U.S. trade unionists, and indigenous people from Central America. Seattle symbolized the first major victory of the transnational anticorporate globalization movement, but Porto Alegre represents the transfer to the South of that movement’s center of gravity.

Now taking place annually, the Porto Alegre forum performs three functions for the real global community. First, it represents a physical and temporal space for this diverse movement to meet, network, and affirm itself. Second, it enables the movement to gather the energies needed to escalate the struggle against the processes and structures of global capitalism. (Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*, put it well when she told the Porto Alegre participants that the movement needs “less civil society and more civil disobedience.”) And third, Porto Alegre provides a venue for the movement to debate the vision, values, and institutions of an alternative world order.

Among the shared understandings emerging from this enterprise are two approaches. At the national and community level, the movement’s goal

must be to consciously subordinate the logic of the market and the pursuit of cost efficiency to the values of security, equity, and solidarity. In the language of the great social democratic scholar Karl Polanyi, this effort is about reembedding the economy in society rather than letting the economy drive society. For this dynamic to unfold, the global context must move from a centralized governance regime that imposes rules in the service of one model of economic growth to a pluralistic system in which institutional power and global economic governance are decentralized. Only in such a global context—more fluid, less structured, more pluralistic, with multiple checks and balances—will the citizens and communities of the South and North find ways to develop based on their own unique values, rhythms, and strategies.

The price of failure would be high. In the early 20th century, the revolutionary theorist Rosa Luxemburg warned that the future might belong to barbarism. Today, corporate-driven globalization is creating instability and resentments that in turn can give way to fascist, fanatical, and authoritarian populist impulses. The forces representing human solidarity and true community must step in quickly to convince the disenchanted masses that a better world is possible. The alternative is to see the vacuum filled by terrorists, demagogues of the religious and radical right, and—as in the 1930s—the purveyors of irrationality and nihilism.

BROKEN PROMISES

By Arjun Appadurai

The international community is neither international nor a community. It is not international because, as a moral idea, it does not exist in any recognizable organizational form. It is not a community because it has little to do with social relations, spatial intimacy, or long-term moral amity. Yet there is something compellingly real about this misnamed object. That reality lies in its moral promise.

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The moral promise of the idea of the international community rests on a moral premise and a wish. Sometime in the period after the birth of the League of Nations, and fortified by the ascendance of the idea of human rights in the international order after World War II, a decisive shift took place away from the notion that relations between nations were fundamentally premised on power and interest and toward the idea that all nations could form some sort of genuine moral system on a planetary scale. The emergence of the United Nations and its affiliated agencies was the main expression of this shift. Ever since, a deep battle has raged between these two visions of politics beyond the nation—one fundamentally realist and instrumental, the other moral and

moralistic. The international community is today less a social fact and more a way to remind nation-states of the common humanity of their citizens and of the essential decencies that must guide relations between nations. It is the single strongest slogan of the liberal value of empathy at a distance, the idea that makes everyone feel obliged to recognize the suffering and needs of all human beings.

The social expression of this moral slogan is, of course, not completely ephemeral. It appears in a web of relations and institutions defined by those nations springing directly from the democratic revolutions of the 18th century—along with their direct supporters outside this original set—and those international organizations that either came out of the League of Nations or the Bretton Woods consensus. But for most of the world, the international community is less a community than a club for the world's wealthiest nations, notably those in North America and Western Europe, which have combined relatively strong democratic polities with high standards of living for the bulk of their citizens.

Thus, as a social and political reality, the international community does not inspire any real sense of ownership among the poorer 80 percent of the world's population. And even among the upper 20 percent, it remains a network for a relatively small group of politicians, bureaucrats, and interventionist opinion makers. Yet its political exclusiveness is not its most difficult challenge.

The central problem is that the international community today is a Westphalian form struggling to remain the ruling authority in an era of increasingly transnational loyalties, regional polities, and global economic regimes. Each of these trends is bad news for polities, economies, and societies conceived in national terms. Diasporic affiliations and mobile, media-linked communities of migrants are redrawing the relationships of location and affiliation. Sri Lankan Tamils, Kurds, Chinese emigrants, Indian techno-coolies, each in their own way, owe their allegiance to multiple forms of citizenship. Their mental geography is surely no longer Westphalian. In this sense, these communities mimic the global market, which is now strikingly beyond the regulative capabilities of most nation-states. Even a

nation as wealthy as the United States no longer escapes the net of the global economy, if nothing else because its runaway financial engine can hardly function wholly within the confines of the U.S. national economy. More generally, both on the street and in the chambers of the technocrats, the fraught debates about an institution such as the World Trade Organization are more than indicators of resistance to reform or of anti-Americanism in many quarters. They are symptoms of the impossibility of constructing new global organizations on an international conceptual foundation.

A certain vision of internationalism is therefore coming to an end. The world needs global organi-

zations and transnational arenas for citizenship and sovereignty. The exclusivity of the international community is not just one more chapter in the story of how wealthy nations have always behaved—carving up the world in the names of their own civilizing missions. Rather, the challenge for the international community is to transform itself into an instrument of global governance. This objective cannot be achieved by stretching the current liberal vision of international law and a common humanity to accommodate more countries and points of view. Rather, new ideas about global governance are a prerequisite for tackling the problem of inclusion.

So, what of the premise and promise of the international community, as primarily a landscape of conscience more than a political or legal formation? Those who today speak on behalf of the international community must tackle the following challenges: Can notions of global equity, peace, and freedom remain regulated by the relations between nations, when markets, migrants, and money have all slipped substantially beyond the control of the nation-state? Can the world continue to behave as if covenants between nations exhaust the limits of what happens with air, water, land, and all other biological resources, when the fate of the environment is clearly affected by transnational processes, interests, and profit-making strategies? Can the world continue to behave as if nations are the most significant receptacles of large-scale loyalty in a world where various forms of religious, moral, and political affiliations are plainly transnational in scope?

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And finally, can the world rely on any sort of international force to bring peace when it is increasingly clear that wars have become an affair of everyday life and of civil society itself in many countries?

If the answers to these questions are not built on

a new cultural architecture that recognizes that global politics are not just international politics by another name, the international community—with its moral promise—may well be reduced to an exclusive club or a museum devoted to memories of Westphalia.

GALLANT DELUSIONS

By Ruth Wedgwood

International community” is a dangerous reference point for the naive. Its connotation of sociability and commitment invites unwise reliance by those who must ultimately fend for themselves. Its diffusion of responsibility excuses countries that have no intention of lending a hand. The concept amounts to a moral hazard, inspiring imprudent behavior by leaders who expect that someone else will pull their fat out of the fire.

Some illustrations: Start with Bosnia in the years of Yugoslavia’s collapse. Sarajevo was urged to refrain from any precipitous move toward independence. Negotiations for a looser form of Yugoslav federation remained possible, and the Bosnian Serbs made clear that, push come to shove, they would cast their lot with Serbia, even boycotting Sarajevo’s national referendum on independence. A close advisor asked Bosnian President Alija

Izetbegovic how he would control the thousands of Yugoslav troops stationed within Bosnia, still loyal to Belgrade. Izetbegovic replied, “I will order them out”—wistfully supposing that the international community would back him up with military might. The 42-month Serb bombardment of Sarajevo began soon after. International peacekeepers delivered food to civilians and (de facto) to combatants, but this thin gruel did not prevent 200,000 civilian

deaths or shorten the war. Even after the fighting began, Izetbegovic rejected more than one peace plan, still betting that the West would enter with guns blazing. The United Nations issued dozens of resolutions, but Security Council rhetoric did not intimidate armed militias. NATO’s belated involvement finally separated the parties, but today Bosnia remains in tatters.

Or consider Cambodia in 1992–93, scene of a massive U.N. peacekeeping operation designed to organize democratic elections. The Khmer Rouge leadership wouldn’t play, opting to exclude thousands of lightly armed blue berets and election organizers from the Khmer territorial redoubt. Vietnam’s protégé and former Khmer Rouge leader Hun Sen was defeated at the polls, but he ignored the ballot box and successfully demanded a joint prime ministership. An election notch on its belt, the

“The lawless scoff at an international community whose words have no supporting cannon fire.”

United Nations promptly withdrew from Cambodia, leaving behind only a few human rights workers. Hun Sen later forced out coruler Prince Norodom Ranariddh and rebuffed a prolonged attempt to organize a joint war crimes tribunal. Hun Sen is now opening luxury hotels near Angkor Wat and running a corrupt economy.

Next is East Timor in 1999. This extraordinary period featured the U.N.-brokered plan for a national referendum on independence—a plan pushed by Portugal and accepted by Indonesia’s remarkable President B.J. Habibie. Aware that Jakarta-backed militias in East Timor were planning retaliatory violence, the U.N. secretariat still felt unable to make any plans to summon deterrent military commitments, fearful of deriding the word of a sovereign

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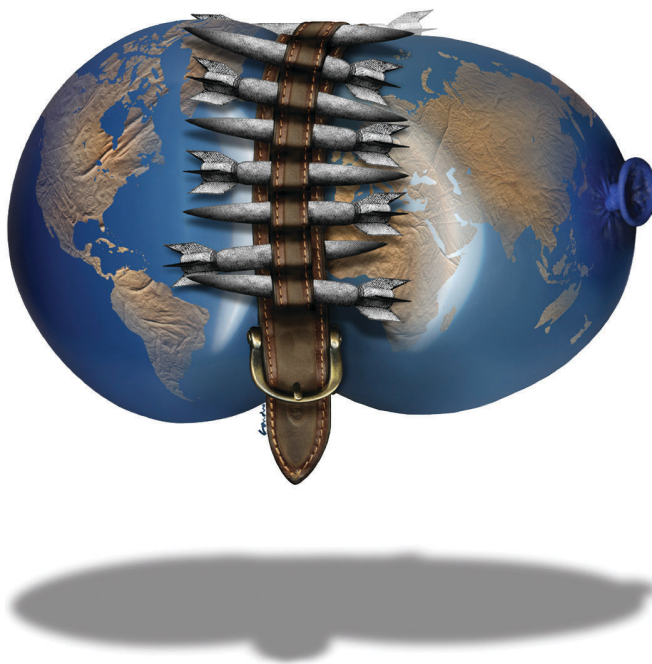
state that pledged to maintain order. The anti-independence militia ran amok, razing the infrastructure of an already poor country. No one was available for peacekeeping until after the damage was done.

International organizations accomplish many fine things. The United Nations writes treaties, monitors human rights, and delivers development assistance. It helps form customary international law and provides a discreet place for negotiations without preliminaries on the shape of a table. But the United Nations, almost as a temperamental matter, has eschewed the use of robust force. It provides a multilateral aegis to states willing to contribute to collective security, but it cannot offer help on its own authority.

So, too, an innocent account of the “international community” can invite giddiness in international lawmaking. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seem eager to speed up history and bury Westphalia, announcing that the legal bedrock of state consent is but a distraction in international norm setting. Europe has joined this bandwagon, embracing a “human security” agenda and supposing that delegating sovereign functions to supranational institutions looks the same worldwide as in Europe. Much as 16th-century Protestant theologian John Calvin preached the election of saints, some multilateral treaty conferences have become all-or-nothing showdowns, where NGOs and “like-minded” negotiators oppose any concessions that accommodate individual national problems or any exceptions to holistic treaty texts. One either joins the accelerating pace of world spirit or must be content to live as a rogue.

The United States frequently encounters this view in multilateral settings. In the land mines debate, for instance, NGOs successfully urged some states to refuse even a temporary allowance for the use of mapped boundary land mines on the Korean peninsula. Europeans and others were uninterested in the bellicose behavior of North Korea, even while U.S. soldiers faced Pyongyang’s divisions on the 38th parallel.

In a similar spirit, the United Nations’ Human Rights Committee has debated whether to claim the authority to disregard national legislatures’ reservations to human rights treaties—even when those reservations are rooted in a national constitution, such as in norms of free speech. The committee stepped into even more contentious territory by issuing an interpretive “general comment” claiming the right to measure state conduct against the unaccepted parts of a treaty, ignoring reservations and holding a country bound regardless of its consent. Some human rights lawyers and NGOs argue that such treaty exceptions are self-serving and that there is no harm in holding each country’s



feet to the fire. Gradualism, it appears, is for sissies. But the result is that the nays may win after all. In the eight years that have passed since the Human Rights Committee’s comment, the U.S. Senate has declined to take up any major human rights treaty.

International law isn’t a Sunday morning sermon. Treaty and customary law need teeth supplied by states committed to enforcement. NGOs have served gallantly as relief agencies in hazardous settings. They monitor human rights abuses and give voice to overlooked local groups. With the media, NGOs help focus the world’s attention. But contrary to the prediction of U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Louis Fréchette, NGOs are not the world’s new superpower. Only states can uproot a rogue regime that threatens nuclear terrorism. Only states can exercise the police authority necessary to dig out

al Qaeda. Only states can provide protection in a border refugee camp otherwise misused by an armed militia as a base to mount cross-border attacks. Only states can rescue a threatened population from genocide.

Laws are not self-enforcing. The world's truly heedless regimes don't care what others think of them. The lawless scoff at an international community whose words have no supporting cannon fire. **FP**

[Want to Know More?]

No discussion of the "international community" would be complete without a thorough understanding of the world's growing array of multilateral organizations. For insight on such agencies, see Akira Iriye's *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and John J. Mearsheimer's "The False Promise of International Institutions" (*International Security*, Winter 1994–95). For case studies on the United Nations, see Michael Doyle, Ian Johnstone, and Robert Orr's, eds., *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional U.N. Operations in Cambodia and El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Devesh Kapur, John P. Lewis, and Richard Webb's, eds., *The World Bank: Its First Half Century* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1997) offers a comprehensive account of the workings and influence of one of the world's most prominent international financial institutions. On the challenges of leadership in multilateral organizations, consult Kapur's "Who Gets to Run the World?" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, November/December 2000) and Stephen Fidler's "Who's Minding the Bank?" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, September/October 2001).

For insights on the continued relevance of the nation-state in the face of increased global governance and economic integration, see Peter Evans's "The Eclipse of the State? Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization" (*World Politics*, October 1997) and Mark Leonard and Marc Thiessen's debate "When Worlds Collide" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, March/April 2001). More comprehensive treatments of this topic include Linda Weiss's *The Myth of the Powerless State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) and Martha Finnemore's *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). See also Stephen D. Krasner's "Think Again: Sovereignty" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, January/February 2001) and Daniel W. Drezner's "Sovereignty for Sale" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, September/October 2001).

Useful analyses on the growing role of nongovernmental organizations and activist groups in world affairs include Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) and Kimberly Ann Elliott and Richard Freeman's "White Hats or Don Quixotes? Human Rights Vigilantes in the Global Economy" (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2001). See also *FOREIGN POLICY*'s coverage of this topic, including P.J. Simmons's "Learning to Live With NGOs" (Fall 1998), Marina Ottaway's "Reluctant Missionaries" (July/August 2001), and Gary Gereffi, Ronie Garcia-Johnson, and Erika Sasser's "The NGO–Industrial Complex" (July/August 2001).

Richard A. Falk analyzes the emergence of normative, rights-based international regimes in *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World* (New York: Routledge Press, 2000). See also Wolfgang Danspeckgruber's, ed., *The Self-Determination of Peoples: Community, Nation, and State in an Interdependent World* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 2002) and P.J. Simmons and Chantal de Jonge Oudratt's, eds., *Managing Global Issues: Lessons Learned* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001).

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