

Globalisation, Human Security and the U.N.

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Summary

Globalisation has given rise to various challenges and opportunities for international organisations. From the practical viewpoint one could divide the impact of globalisation on the international system into four different aspects:

- 1) global risks or global issues,
- 2) regional response to global issues,
- 3) an establishment of international regimes, and
- 4) the role of the United Nations, including its specialised agencies.

To minimise risks that the international community faces and to address ourselves to the threats of those risks, we have to develop the concept of human security.

International organisations, nongovernmental groups regional organisations, and individuals are now playing important roles in international cooperation and coordination.

U.N. reform is related to the question of political participation and political power. If many members of the international community are aware that their ultimate interests are attached to the international community, we may be able to reconcile the balance between responsibility and power.

Globalisation has many meanings. However, from the practical or policy-oriented angle, one could use a somewhat broad definition of globalisation; that is globalisation means the rising international interdependence on a global scale

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in economic and political matters. In other words, growing economic interdependence among regions or between countries and a widespread diffusion of certain political ideas, such as democracy, and accompanying consciousness of sharing certain common political values among nations are considered to be major aspects of globalisation. Globalisation, in this sense, has given rise to various challenges and opportunities for international organisations, particularly the United Nations, including the so-called specialised agencies.

From the practical viewpoint one could divide the impact of globalisation on the international system including the United Nations system, into four different aspects.

Global Issues

The first aspect is the question of global risks or global issues. The second aspect is the growing importance of the roles of international regimes and organisations. The third is the question of participation in the international decision-making process and, connected with it, the question of legitimacy of international regimes or organisations. The fourth and last aspect of the challenges is the question of players in the international arena; that is, instead of nation states, other players, such as international organisations, nongovernmental groups, regional organisations, and even sometimes individuals are now playing important roles in the international scene.

On the first of these four aspects - that is, the question of global risks or issues - it is, in a sense, clear to us all that the world is now full of so-called global issues or global risks which have to be dealt with: the question of environment or pollution; so-called infectious diseases including AIDS and SARS; terrorism; refugee problems; drug traffic; international crime - we could enumerate quite a number of so-called global issues which have come to our attention and which have come to the forefront of international discussions over the past decade or so. Some of those risks are very systematic, systematic in the sense that they involve not only each members of the international community but they involve the system as a whole.

In order to cope with those global issues we can have various responses or approaches. One approach is to globalise the bilateral framework of agreements. For instance, in Western Europe, NATO, which used to be a more or less regional organ - in other words, to guarantee the security of Europe - has become a global alliance, an organ of joint efforts, to secure world security through the joint efforts

of the United States and Western Europe. Also, in the Far East, the U.S.-Japan security alliance has in fact become more and more global in its roles and dimensions, so that the alliance has not only been conceived as a U.S.-Japan bilateral defence agreement, but it has turned out to be an international alliance between the U.S. and Japan to cope with global problems. The dispatch of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces to Iraq, under the Japan-U.S. security arrangement, is in fact one of the signs of this globalisation of bilateral arrangements.

Secondly, there is a regional response. For example, in order to cope with interdependent economic activities, FTAs (free-trade arrangements) have been encouraged in various parts of the world. Even the enlargement of the EU has an element of regional response to global issues. In other words, European integration not only has regional meaning, but it also has global meaning. The Integration of Europe is, partly at least, an effort to cope with the global issues through regional cooperation.

There is, in addition, a third approach; this is an establishment of international regimes, particularly international legal regimes, to cope with global issues. The Kyoto Protocol on environment or greenhouse effects can be cited as one of the good examples of such regimes.

There is also a creation of a new mechanism. We have developed not only legal regimes but also a new mechanism or new facility which addresses itself to global issues; so-called global environment facility or special fund on AIDS, can be mentioned as one such mechanism.

But mechanism can be more informal, or less structured, in the sense that, instead of creating a new machine or a new organisation, sometimes we have reinforced the existing mechanism in order to settle international disputes. The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has been utilised more frequently and more effectively over the past years between the United States and Europe, the U.S. and Japan, and among certain other member countries. This dispute settlement of the WTO could be regarded as one of the efforts to cope with global issues.

Another way of dealing with global issues is to make use of mechanisms of policy coordination. G7 meetings of world industrialised countries or the Paris-based OECD policy coordination mechanism or policy coordination encouraged by the IMF and the World Bank could be regarded as one of the responses to deal effectively with global issues.

Last, but not least, and perhaps the most important, is the role of the United Nations, including its specialised agencies. In economic, military as well as political spheres, the roles of the United Nations have to be reinforced in order to deal with those global issues. In a word, one could say that the roles of international organisations, particularly the role of the United Nations, have to be increased, redefined and reinforced, because the increase of global issues has highlighted the question or adjustment of the balance between the national interests of each country and the interests of the international community as a whole. This phenomenon or this consciousness has given rise to the concept of so-called global governance. And, of course, the United Nations is one of the key players in the global governance of the international community.

Concept of Human Security

The new risks, particularly risks to the system as a whole, such as pollution, AIDS, terrorism, drug trafficking, international crime, or even refugee problems, could be included in this concept of human security.

These new risks to the system as a whole have to be dealt with not only through the cooperation of various nation states, but also through more effective coordination among nations, enterprises, regional organisations and international organisations. In other words, today, the international community faces different and complicated types of risk to the system as a whole. As one of the efforts to minimise those risks and address ourselves to the threats of those risks, we have to develop the concept of human security. This concept of human security is closely bound up with the concept of new risks on a global scale. Since the risks are "systematic" and globalised, the response to deal with these risks should be worked out in a global dimension, that is, from the standpoint of all human kind.

There is, in addition, another reason why the new concept of human security has to be emphasised in the international community. That is because of the existence or even the growth of gaps which have been widening, as a result of globalisation.

Globalisation, which is bound up with the growing interdependence of various economies or various states, implies the expansion of the free market and rising international competition, which again implies that there may be some dropouts and growing gaps between winners and losers, and sometimes those losers are concentrated regionally, racially or ethnically. And if there are those people, particularly certain political groups or regions which have been excluded from the mainstream of globalisation, these groups are likely to resist or even rebel

against globalisation. In other words, the so-called question of gaps and differences has to be addressed not only from the standpoint of fairness or equality, but also from the standpoint of stability of the international system as a whole. This is because, if some members of international society are excluded from economic development or progress, these groups are likely to become disturbing forces in the international community.

There is also a third reason as to why the concept of human security should be worked out carefully and effectively. This is related to the question of shared values or shared principles. As a result of globalisation, such values or political principles such as human rights, democracy or environmental protection have become more and more widely shared by many peoples and many nations. However, these values sometimes contradict each other. For instance, from the standpoint of the environment, it may sometimes be necessary to put constraints on the exports and imports of some goods, but from the standpoint of free trade, regulation may not be appropriate. Therefore, we have to reconcile various principles or values - free trade versus environmental protection or even free competition versus social security.

In addition, there is perhaps the fourth reason as to why we have to deal with the problems of global issues with the new concept of human security.

The world is now heading towards an amorphous or virtual community. In other words, although in a somewhat primitive way, we now witness the birth of international solidarity - "solidarity" in the French sense of the word or somewhat close to the concept of collective consciousness. In other words, the idea of sharing political values implies that we form virtual communities around those political values. Even though we may not form military or political alliances on a nation-to-nation or region-to-region level, we may have to form an amorphous, loose network of people who share common values. In order to deal with the issues of children's rights or women's rights or the question of disabled persons, we may have to think about the new concept of solidarity, which is implied in the idea of human security.

There is also a fifth reason as to why we have to deal with various "global" matters under the concept of human security. This is related to the question of ethnic, tribal or religious conflicts as opposed to national conflicts.

The development over the past decade or so has given rise to the situation in which instead of threats from some nation states to other nations,

conflicts between ethnic minorities or conflicts arising from political repression within countries, have increasingly borne international implications. In other words, the interdependence of the world means that political disputes or conflicts that used to be confined, at least in its political meaning, within a certain boundary, have now involved an international dimension. The question of refugees is one good example of such internationalisation of ethnic disputes.

Herein lies the reason why the United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations have increased greatly over the past ten years or so.

The Role of Citizens

Let us now turn to the role of citizens in the international system. Traditionally, the international system is supposed to be composed of nation states. However, the development of globalisation has given rise to a new situation in which the citizens of the world have to be directly involved in the international decision-making process or international system.

It used to be generally thought that the economic development of a nation or a region depended mostly on political leadership and national strategy. However, there is a growing consciousness that economic development is closely bound up with education, fostering human resources and also good governance. To realise effective education systems and good governance, citizens' participation in the whole economic development process is perhaps more important than the formation of national strategy. In this sense, at least in the sphere of economic development, citizens or individuals have become important players for international cooperation and coordination.

Now, there's another reason as to why citizens have to be more directly involved in the international political process. This is related to the existing pattern of decision-making in the international community.

Today, the pattern of exercising political power in the world has been undergoing a rapid transformation. Political decisions which used to be taken within the national framework are now carried out at least partially through international coordination. Under these circumstances citizens feel that they are directly affected by the decision-making process in international organisations or international system, but they feel also that they are not able to participate directly in that process. Of course, one could argue that the international system has been composed of nation states, and many nation states - or even most nation states - are

run through democratic process and therefore, citizens, through their representatives, participate in the international decision-making process. But unlike the parliament in each country, the geographical distance of the seat of international organisations and also the somewhat less transparent nature of international decision-making processes have given rise to various complaints and disenchantment on the part of citizens on the process of international decision-making.

In order to redress this situation, the United Nations and specialised agencies and other international organisations should encourage the participation - if not direct participation, "indirect participation" of citizens by way of transparency of their decision-making processes. They should sometimes even go as far as to allow citizens to participate in the meetings of international organisations.

U.N. Reform

The growing interdependence of nations and individuals in the international community has increased the consciousness of many people around the world, particularly taxpayers, on the question of the effective use of their money by international organisations; the question of evaluation, or assessment of the activities of international organisations has become more and more important. This requirement for evaluation has obliged many international organisations to become more transparent in their process of policy-making and to make structural reforms in order to be much closer to the citizens of the world. In brief, transparency and more intensive evaluation of activities is the first aspect of U.N. reform.

Secondly, there is a question of policy coordination. The emergence of global issues has furthered the situation in which many international organisations have to deal with the same problem in their own domain from their own perspective. Consequently, policy coordination of various organisations has become very important in order to synthesise those different perspectives. In order to effectively carry out such policy coordination and to maintain coherence, we may have to create certain new coordinating bodies or, otherwise, increase intensified activities of coordination among existing international organisations.

Thirdly, there is the question of legitimacy. The question of legitimacy of international organisations has become very serious, because the power structure of the United Nations or economic organisations does not necessarily reflect the real power structure of the world. The meaningful participation of developing countries is not fully guaranteed in various economic organisations, and some nations and some people, particularly in the developing world, feel that the responsibilities they have to carry do not match the degree of their participation in the decision-making and policymaking process of the IMF or WTO or other international organisations. The disenchantment of some developing countries has grown larger, as the solution to global issues requires the increasing cooperation of those countries and their responsibilities have consequently grown larger.

In the political field, there are countries which think that the existing structure of the United Nations Security Council does not reflect the degree of responsibility and contribution which has been shouldered by them. The present Security Council, which has been dominated by five so-called permanent members of the Council who have exclusive veto power, is not in compliance with the ideas of the democratic decision-making processes of the international community. There is also the question of geographical or regional balance. There are some who think that the existing system has been predominantly tilted towards Western Europe, somewhat out of proportion to the economic and political power in the international structure.

Related to this problem, there is a question of the composition of the employees of international organisations, and the question of geographical balance has sometimes been disregarded because of the national interests of a certain country or a certain region, yet this balance is regarded as the fundamental issue of the legitimacy of international organisations. Related to the geographical balance, there remains the problem of composition of regional groups. At present, the U.N. is composed of five major groups; Asia, Africa, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Latin America with the U.S. and Australia/New Zealand included in the Western group. This pattern of grouping has become outmoded but an appropriate adjustment has not yet been carried out.

The question of UN reform has been discussed for years, but we have not yet seen many concrete results produced; there are, of course, some good results, but many things are still to be desired.

New Players

On the question of actors or players in the international arena, it is self-evident that nongovernmental organisations, and some volunteer groups have become more and more important in the activities of the international community. Here we have to think about the reason why those actors, non-state actors, have become important. This question is related to the question of value-sharing or the concept of "solidarity." On certain issues, it is politically very difficult for nations to advance particular causes or particular values, because many people tend to think that if certain nations advance particular values or principles, those values or principles are considered to be related to their national interest and the advocacy of those values or principles is regarded as advancement of national interests.

In order to avoid this dilemma, the private actors - in other words, NGOs or groups of volunteers - could play a very important role. Even the question of gender equality, is in some countries considered to be politically-coloured and if these issues are dealt with only by nation states, they may be likely to develop into international sources of conflict, but if nongovernmental organisations advance the causes of gender equality, they could be less vulnerable to the criticism of the advancement of certain concealed national strategy.

U. N. Reform and Global Power Structure

The question of U. N. reform is in fact related to the question of political participation and political power. Some countries or some people feel that the present international system has not given full-scale participation to many countries in the decision-making process and we need some reform to correct it. This aspect is undoubtedly true, but also we should not forget the other side of the coin. That is the political implication of participation. Positive participation gives you power. In other words, to participate in decision-making and to share the burden or share responsibility has given power to those who share responsibility. Participation implies influence. In this sense, the reform of the U.N. is bound to imply readjustment of the power structure of the international community.

In this connection, we have to ask ourselves; why do certain nations, instead of having recourse to the U.N. decision-making process and the United Nations Security Council procedures, form so-called like-minded countries' coalitions and, instead of going through the U.N. process, rely on such coalitions? The answer is not difficult to find. This is partly because the power structure of the United

Nations, in the eyes of some, does not reflect the willingness of sharing political responsibility. Those nations who have been given certain status, privileged status in international organisations, either through economic strength or military strength, are obliged to share responsibility.

On the other hand, those nations which have privileged positions should not abuse their privileges in order to enhance their own national interests to the detriment of international interests. If nations endowed with certain privileges (such as the seat of the S.C.) are not willing to shoulder politico-military responsibility, the U.N. system is likely to be undermined.

How to balance these two - in other words, the willingness to shoulder responsibility and the power structure in the UN system - is perhaps the most important issue which we now face. If many members of the international community are aware that their ultimate interests are attached more to the international community rather than to their local or national unity, we may be able to reconcile these two aspects - in other words, the balance between responsibility and power.