

# ARCHIVE INTRODUCTION

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## ORIGINS

International organizations became an important phenomenon during the 20th century, and grew at a tremendous pace. In 1909 there were 176 intergovernmental organizations, but their number multiplied almost geometrically to 5,825 in 1999. The number of international NGOs grew rapidly as well, from 37 in 1909 to 251 in 1999. All these organizations differ widely in their size, scope, structure, operations, areas of expertise, and their degree of "universality."

The data was presented in Appendix C of the Jordan book below, and was compiled by the Yearbook of International Organizations in Brussels, Union of International Associations, **1999/2000** edition, available at [www.uia.org/uiastats/tb399.htm](http://www.uia.org/uiastats/tb399.htm) ]

As explained further in the next subsection on the Overview and Structure of this archive, an excellent set of books has traced the development and operations of this vast new type of organization over several decades and into the 21st century. IO Watch defers to this excellent and thorough general source. It wishes instead to pursue its major concerns and future areas of activity -- the lack of the rule of law, and management accountability and performance issues in international organizations -- through a systematic and in-depth analysis of these topics as found in a single organization, the United Nations.

The book is Robert S. Jordan, with Clive Archer, Gregory P. Granger, and Kerry Ordes, International organizations: A comparative approach to the management of cooperation, fourth ed., Greenwood/Praeger, Westport, CN (USA), **2001**.

The UN is the best-known, largest, most ubiquitous, and most widely-chronicled of all the international organizations. It is often grandly referred to as "the world organization". IO Watch believes that a thorough analysis of its experience can be a platform that shed lights as well on the legal and accountability complexities and problems in international organizations in general.

Despite much optimism in recent years about significant management reform within the United Nations, all is not well there in the new millennium, as the following two quotes from UN "insider" reports demonstrate:

"Challenges to implementation

... No amount of money or resources can substitute for the significant changes that are urgently needed in the culture of the [United Nations].

... People everywhere are fully entitled to consider that [the United Nations] is *their* organization, and as such to pass judgement on its activities and the people who serve in it.

Furthermore, wide disparities in staff quality exist and those in the system are the first to acknowledge it; better performers are given unreasonable workloads to compensate for those who are less capable. Unless the United Nations takes steps to become a true meritocracy, it will not be able to reverse the alarming trend of qualified personnel, the young among them in particular, leaving the Organization. Moreover, qualified people will have no incentive to join it. Unless managers at all levels, beginning with the Secretary-General and his senior staff, seriously address this problem on a priority basis, reward excellence and remove incompetence, additional resources will be wasted and lasting reform will become impossible."

Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations [the "Brahimi report"], UN document A/55/305 -- S/2000/809 of **August 21 2000**, p. xiv.

[Note: The full document is available at <http://www.un.org/documents/> under the A document number.

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi has most recently served as the UN Secretary-General's special envoy in Afghanistan and in Iraq.]

"A new survey of ... [UN integrity perceptions has found that] while structures for reporting and combating corruption exist, most staff members are either unaware of how to use them or afraid to do so for fear of high-level retaliation.

'The UN has a 'phone book' of rules and regulations which are totally useless as they are never practiced', a staff member is quoted as saying ... [Another says.] 'Senior leaders caught in serious breaches of ethics should be punished, not promoted as usual.'

... [The study] is being made public at a time when Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been forced by the widespread publicity [about corruption in the Iraq oil-for-food program] to appoint a high-level panel to look into [it] ...

The new study records relatively high levels of worker satisfaction ..., but its most negative findings have to do with ingrown leadership and the lack of response to reports of corruption.

'Get rid of the old boy network,' one staff member ... [says.] 'That network is wide, tenacious and powerful. ... So long as you can wind your way into that network,

you are OK. ... Opposing the network is certainly the end of a UN career."

Warren Hoge, "Report criticizes the way UN fights corruption", International Herald Tribune, **June 16, 2004**. [Note: The actual survey is "United Nations organizational integrity survey", Final Report, prepared by Deloitte Consulting LLP, **June 2004**. It can be found at <http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/index.shtml> .]

Over the past six decades, the United Nations (hereinafter referred to as the "UN") and its programmes have been involved in many global issues and efforts, and have produced vast amounts of publications and information on UN goals, intentions, and activities.

This IO Watch archive, in contrast, focuses on the lack of analytical and transparent information on UN performance, management accountability, and above all, the rule of law in its operations. The archive seeks to critically examine these elements, as a basis for real reforms and a much more effective UN, and to better understand the complex dynamics and weaknesses of international organizations in general and improve their effectiveness.

FIRST and most broadly, the archive contains over 2,500 quotes excerpted from newspapers, magazines, journals, books and reports from UN staff, scholars, groups, organizations, or informed observers about the UN (and it will add many more in the future). IO Watch believes that these sources are very insightful and very readable, and hopes that archive users will seek out the original sources to read them in their entirety.

These sources all critically analyze various aspects of UN operations, its management culture, and its responsiveness to emerging issues, in order to stimulate fresh thinking and encourage substantive UN reform. The comments over the years suggest little progress so far, but perhaps their collective weight as presented in this archive might now begin to have some real impact in obtaining a more effective UN, especially in light of the very serious performance and accountability problems which the UN encountered during 2004.

SECOND, it takes much time to figure out all the complex realities of UN operations that go on behind the rhetoric. No single person could ever comprehend it. Therefore, this archive is very much a group product, drawn directly from the experiences, analyses, writings, observations, and documents gathered by an amorphous and informal network of UN veterans over the past two decades.

A rough tabulation indicates that more than 65 people were involved, in varying ways and combinations and at different times, in this process. Almost all were UN staff (plus a few diplomats and interagency or specialized agency people), and almost all spent 10-20 years or more working at the UN. Most of them served in either New York or Geneva, but many also spent time in UN field operations or at other duty stations. About half are retired staff or have left the UN, and the other half are still staff members. About one-third of the people were women and two-thirds men. Half were professional staff -- mostly senior, while one-third were Director-level or above and one-sixth were General Service staff. Finally, almost all of them worked in management functions.

In terms of region or nationality, these UN veterans came from all regions and from 39 countries: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Lebanon, Norway, Panama, Russia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela.

THIRD, while the written material and the insights and experiences of this UN veterans "network" are the key to this archive, the actual compilation was made by David E. Wilson. He is a US citizen with a BA degree (economics, University of Colorado, Boulder), an MBA degree (accounting, auditing, and administrative theory, University of California, Berkeley), and an MPA and a DPA degree (policy analysis, financial management, and comparative and developmental administration, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.). He had an award-winning doctoral dissertation published as two books; and is a member of US scholastic honorary societies in public administration and accounting.

From 1967-1978, Mr. Wilson was a management auditor and evaluator, project manager, and International Division programme planner at the US General Accounting Office (GAO) in Washington, D.C. (renamed the Government Accountability Office in mid-2004). He prepared reports to the US Congress on government management systems and US international trade and aid programmes, including a two-year field assignment in Europe. He was promoted four times and won five outstanding performance awards at the GAO, and is a certified internal auditor (CIA) and an associate member of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

From 1978-1996, Mr. Wilson served as the senior research officer in the UN Joint Inspection Unit in Geneva, Switzerland, where he prepared 29 reports, and participated in 10 others, to the UN General Assembly and specialized agency governing bodies, primarily on evaluation, management systems, accountability, and management reform issues. In mid-1996 he reported waste and mismanagement and quickly became a failed UN whistle-blower. He spent his last three-plus years sitting unassigned -- "on the payroll but not on the job" -- until he reached retirement age in late 1999.