

PERSONNEL

Introductory quotes

"Article 100. ...

2. Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Article 101.

1. The staff shall be appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly. ...

3. The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

Charter of the United Nations, **1945**, Articles 100 and 101.

[emphasis added]

"In 1946 the [UN] Secretariat had to be constituted. It had an initial core, which was the staff of the Preparatory Commission, numbering about 350 officials From that nucleus, it expanded within six months to about 3,000. As noted by W.R. Crocker:

'All but a tiny minority had been appointed by the end of August, and most were appointed between April and July. Where did this swarm come from? Some of them had had, like most Assistant Secretaries-General, been delegates or on delegation staffs in the early days. Some were friends of delegates, and got through [by] what is known in international secretariats as political pressure -- which can easily be repulsed if the authorities have the will. Some -- and possibly the largest number -- found their way through the friendship of a senior officer.'

Walter R. Crocker, "Some notes on the United Nations Secretariat", International Organization, Vol. IV, No. 4, **November 1950**, pp. 609-610, as discussed in Henri Reymond, "Some unresolved problems of the international civil service", *Public Administration Review* (US), May/June 1970, pp. 225-236, [238].

[Note: Many people would say that UN processes of personnel selection have scarcely changed ever since, except for the extreme explosiveness with which this initial expansion occurred.]

"A distinguished professor of international law once deplored the fact that 'the League of

Nations has been abandoned to the diplomats', but the UN Secretariat is much more dependent on the national diplomatic bureaucracies. They derive invaluable flexibility and power from having additional posts at their disposal ... to confer favors but also to displace unwanted staff. ... the incentives are all the greater because many UN posts, especially the senior ones, are much sought after because of the [high] scales of pay ... and the prestige they carry.

A diplomatic ideology has even developed at the UN, [that] there is no higher dignity than that of Ambassador, holders of this title being by definition capable of taking up any high-ranking post, even in a technical field. This naturally generates a bias in favor of 'generalists' at the expense of other professionals."

Maurice Bertrand, "The recruitment policy of United Nations staff", in de Cooker, Chris, ed., International Administration: Law and Management Practice in International Organisations, UNITAR, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, **1989**, II.2/1-9, pp. II/2 and /3.

[Note: Mr. Bertrand served as an Inspector in the UN Joint Inspection Unit from 1968-1985.]

"The conventional wisdom in Third World upmarket employment circles is that the best job opportunities in these recessionary days are still available in the United Nations system -- a bewildering alphabet soup rich in countless commissions, subcommissions, fact-finding missions, agencies, expert groups, blue-ribbon panels and blue-helmet peacekeeping operations. For the most part, it is a sprawling secretive system, where many modern-day rajahs reign with conspicuous disregard for accountability"

Pranay Gupte, "United Nations shenanigans", Newsweek International, **May 24, 1993**, p. 6.

[Note: Mr. Gupte is executive editor of *The Earth Times*.]

"The Charter is appropriately stern about the United Nations civil service. The international community cannot afford the current decline from its original high motivation and quality.

That decline has been underway for many years, and member-governments cannot escape much of the responsibility for it. Today, with poverty afflicting more human beings than ever, and an already dangerously damaged environment, the UN also faces huge burdens in its original mandate for maintaining peace and security. In face of these unprecedented responsibilities staff morale in the UN is low, and staff quality is increasingly questionable.

Internal as well as external analyses gave detailed warnings of weakness over twenty years ago. Member-governments were urged by their own experts to act in 1975. If this trend is to be halted and positively reversed it is necessary to understand how it came about in the first place.

Governmental pressure

Ensuring quality recruitment

The leadership factor

Civil service salaries

The issue of 'deadwood and mediocrity'

Permanent staff contracts

Senior echelon terms

Outside resources

A sustained quality roster ...

The gender imbalance

Job descriptions

Administrative justice"

Erskine Childers, with Brian Urquhart, Chapter X, "The international civil service", in "Renewing the United Nations System", Development Dialogue,

1994:1, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, **1994**, pp. 159, and 159-170 *passim*.

"As the leaders of every nation on earth mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations this week, they must do more than fill the General Assembly hall with platitudes Without significant changes in organization and behavior, the UN will lose its remaining effectiveness and public support.

On financial management, there has been significant progress in the last two years. The main problem now is the continued insistence of member countries on imposing expensive and unsuitable patronage appointees on the Secretariat and UN agencies. No political body is free of patronage, but profligate waste at headquarters while the UN and its agencies run out of funds to meet emergency human needs in the field is intolerable."

"A hard look", *The Washington Post*, in the International Herald Tribune, **October 24, 1995**.

Chronological quotes

"The uncontested establishment of [US government screening and approving personnel for UN service in the 1950s] nullified the Charter concept of an independent and effective civil service, inflicting untold damage on the potential of the United Nations. Other governments would thenceforth [and aggressively] also install their nominees in virtually all significant, and in many insignificant, U. N. posts. Hundreds of meaningless and costly positions would be created throughout the leadership of the U. N. system for the sole purpose of accommodating national candidates -- some of whom [were] devoid of qualifications Unwanted in their homelands [or] trailing rumors of incompetence or scandal.

The useful work of field missions would, on occasion, be similarly encumbered by such superfluous emissaries, dispatched to lucrative senior field assignments

In 1978 [Secretary-General] Waldheim would inform his unhappy staff that 'the General Assembly has made it clear the geographical distribution of the staff is the over-riding factor' - - without reference to the contrary mandate of the Charter.

By the nineteen-eighties, the *Times* would report the view of 'one Western ambassador' that 'You try to get as many posts as possible for your own nationals. This is wrong, but everybody does it.'

Shirley Hazzard, on the UN in the **1950s**, in "Breaking Faith, Part I", The New Yorker, September 25, 1989, pp. 63-99, p. 74.

" with the UN practices in view, Loveday made a strong case for a centralized [personnel] system [to] provide consistent experience in evaluating qualifications, give wider publicity to vacancies, ensure a better knowledge of the market, facilitate the adoption of common standards ... and testing processes, and, above all, contribute to 'the development of a single unified international civil service.'

Loveday did not overlook the strong political obstacles and real practical difficulties opposing any central recruitment system, and did not seem too sanguine as to the possibilities of its being adopted He felt, however, strongly on the weaknesses of the present situation. He

said:

"Everywhere the system is amateurish, groping, depending largely on change, subject to political pressure which is sometimes useful and more often a menace, and among all the international organizations that exist today it is uncoordinated."

Fifteen years after the judgement, one does not feel inclined to question its validity. Indeed, one feels an increased degree of urgency [for more effective recruitment.]"

Sir Alexander Loveday, Reflections on international administration, Clarendon, Oxford, **1956**, p. 50, as discussed in Henri Reymond, "Some unresolved problems of the international civil service", *Public Administration Review* (US), May/June 1970, pp. 225-236, [238].

"Based on its studies ... the committee reiterates the vital importance above all others of selecting well qualified personnel and not letting standards deteriorate because of the difficulties and complexities of recruitment. The ability of the United Nations to carry out its essential and urgent work depends in the final analysis on the quality of its personnel."

Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, document A/7359 of November 27, **1968**, p. 37, 1968, as quoted in Housang Ameri, Politics of staffing the United Nations Secretariat, Major Concepts in Politics and Political Theory, Vol. 8, Peter Lang, New York, 1996, p. 549.

"Who will predictably be attracted to the existence of international administrator? What rewards will he find in this life style? Many of us envision a person [devoted to world government, but there are] some very pragmatic reasons....

a. The overeducated. Frequently, developing nations send people abroad or educate locally those who cannot find jobs at home. Therefore, they turn to the UN for employment.

b. Political casualties. Losers in national political contests may be attracted to the international field [while awaiting] the next opportunity to run for office

c. The stateless. When wholesale changes in regime occur in certain countries, numbers of people fleeing from their homeland have skills which are needed in international organizations.

d. Temporary expatriates. Expatriate life styles, because of their emoluments, will predictably attract people [not only with pay, but] climate, scenery, household help, and feelings of personal importance.

e. The temporarily withdrawn. When life becomes too complicated at home, international service may present a way of avoiding painful situations For example marital problems."

Walter Balk and James J. Heaphey, "Centralization of international civil service: A critique", Public Administration Review (US), **May/June 1970**, pp. 252-257 [255].

"The efficiency of an organization is to be judged on its efficacy in reaching its basic objectives [of which, *ceteris paribus*, equitable geographic distribution is one in the UN Charter].

....

Having said this, there remain certain pertinent questions. Given the general scarcity of talent, would not the newly emergent nations be wiser to concentrate on their own national construction tasks -- needing all the talent available to them, rather than [being represented on] secretariats of the international organizations? Can those [newly independent states] really afford the brain drain incurred by such representation and the risk of loss of national identity that it frequently entails in international officials? No statesman with any foresight is likely to allow his compatriots of high calibre to leave the service of his country in favor of the international service.

Likewise, no patriot passionately committed to the well-being of his fellow countrymen is likely to elect for the international service when his compatriots continue to suffer."

Tien-Cheng Young, "The international civil service reexamined", Public Administration Review (US), **May/June 1970**, pp. 217-224 [221].

"Few would dispute the fact that conditions of service in the Secretariat are no longer adequate to secure a reasonable supply of staff of the quality described in the UN Charter. In addition there have been weaknesses in the recruitment process itself: inattention to candidates' levels of training, responsibility and experience, artificially restricted choice of candidates, failure to use properly the probation period ... submission to pressure from delegations, personal bias, delay and uncertainty in offers to candidates, absence of a coherent career policy and of effective in-service training. All these factors are prejudicial to high quality recruitment. Internal selection committees have tended to fall into disrepute and have permitted practices to flourish which encourage the view of the staff that the International Civil Service is in a process of decline."

Recommendations for the reform of UN staff conditions made by the Council of the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations in **December 1971**, as quoted in Shirley Hazzard, Defeat of an ideal: A study of the self-destruction of the United Nations, Macmillan, London, 1973, p. 113.

"Some members of the [UN] staff have great ability and commitment but they support a great many parasitic 'deadwood' employees and employees serving primarily the political interests of their government. ... The principle of merit can in the long run be protected only by fair and objective procedures and safeguards, which are subject to law and to effective grievance procedures. But ... should the present trends continue ... the staff would probably be suspected of lacking neutrality and might lose the confidence of some Member States. The result might be paralysis of the Secretariat, which would be unable to play an effective role in situations of crisis."

Theodor Meron, The United Nations Secretariat: The Rules and the Practice, Chapter 4, "Selected legal questions", D.C. Heath, Lexington, Mass., **1977**, pp. 83-84.

[Note: Mr. Meron is a former delegate to the UN, international law professor at New York University, and currently serves as president of the UN tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.]

"For its friends, of which we are two, the problem [at the UN's 40th anniversary is] that it is not particularly effective in averting conflict or fighting poverty, [nor ready to reverse] these trends, let alone its own genteel deterioration.

[Among other things], the Secretary-General must have the basic authority to manage his own organization; to hire and fire according to the highest professional standards and thereby provide overall tone and leadership to the system. There must also be a higher caliber of appointments at the top. There is nothing wrong with political appointments if appointees have a distinguished and relevant career record. But governments have too often considered comfortable United Nations sinecures a dumping ground for mediocre diplomats. A board of independent, eminent people should be constituted to establish the desirable qualifications for each senior vacancy as it comes up. If individual governments still insist on sending poorly qualified time-servers, at least their actions would be recognized for what they are."

Sadrudin Aga Khan and Maurice F. Strong, "Proposals to reform the U.N., 'limping' in its 40th year, New York Times, **October 8, 1985**.

"Survival of the unfittest

.... Few [UN system] agencies have staff able or willing to develop anything new. Many are packed with time-servers more concerned with the forms of international bureaucracy, above all their own little empires, than practical results.

.... the UN is right to [seek balance] and discriminate in favour of people from the third world.

Alas, third world countries are less discriminating in choosing who to send there. For them the UN agencies serve often as a convenient dumping-ground for people they would rather not have at home, because they are incompetent or a political threat. And under the guise of equity, they have insisted that cushy jobs be created for their nationals at all levels of the UN.

The richer countries, who complain the loudest about this, must share the blame for [politicized recruitment] to an international civil service [theoretically] beyond the reach of national governments.

Member governments' intrusive backing of their own nationals has created a system in which merit plays little role. Too many UN staff have got in (and on) not because of what they achieved, but because of where they came from, who they knew or who owed whom a favour."

"The United Nations agencies: A case for emergency treatment", The Economist, **December 2, 1989**, pp. 27-28, 30 [28].

"The good life at the United Nations could soon be over.

.... Former high ranking officials claim that perks, extravagance and overstaffing have become a way of life at the New York headquarters.

The accusations follow angry protests over the UN's slow reaction to the famine in Somalia.

A former top UN administrator said bloated payrolls and benefits tie up most of the budget. 'The UN could work with 25 percent of the staff', he said.

'They play games producing superfluous studies, then spend more money on studies of what they've just studied.'

'The real waste is travel. You're entitled to a number of trips around the world to the most ridiculous conferences, like the future of education in Malta. You go there and spend all your time on the beach.'

'They're available to thousands of employees, and its basically bleeding the UN.'

Mike Graham, "Good life is over for UN's pampered staff", Sunday Express (UK), **September 5, 1992**.

"Current problems in what you [Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali] have correctly identified as 'the present outmoded system of personnel management' constitute a major stumbling block to true reform within the Organization.

Defects exist in nearly every aspect of present personnel practice. Recruitment has been undertaken on a more or less haphazard basis and consumes an inordinate amount of time. Training programmes are insufficient. Promotion exercises have become inordinately complicated to the point of being nearly unworkable ... Discipline and dismissal procedures are encumbered by seemingly interminable appeals processes.

The result is too much 'deadwood' doing too little work and too few good staff members doing too much, over-extending themselves sometimes to the point where they have become counter-productive."

Dick Thornburgh, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, "Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations" ["The Thornburgh report"], **1 March 1993**, pp. 8-9.

According to Sahnoun, [to avoid future humanitarian operational failures as in Somalia] the UN should learn from the non-governmental humanitarian organizations. [Their] volunteers work hard under uncomfortable conditions and come down with everything from diarrhea and flu to malaria, dengue fever, and worse -- for low pay. When they 'burn out', they move on.

.... UN employees, in contrast, don't do anything without security, a bureaucracy, and comfortable accommodations -- and, he might have added, a phalanx of public relations people. They are paid exceptionally well and receive numerous perks ... When they burn out, if they work long enough in the field for that to happen, they are promoted to still higher paying jobs.

'The UN should organize a corps of volunteers', Sahnoun suggested, 'who are ready to take a few months off ... because they are dedicated, because they are motivated.' If the UN agencies continue to rely on civil servants, they will not be effective. 'They might be able to raise funds, [and] ... provide logistical support', he said, 'but the [real field work is done by] the non-governmental humanitarian organizations and the Red Cross.'

Ray Bonner, "Why we went": How the United Nations turned its back on Somalia and subverted the best chance for peace", Mother Jones, (USA), **March-April 1993**, pp. 54-60, [60]

[Note: Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun, the Secretary-General's special envoy in Somalia in 1992, was no hypocrite. According to the same article, he "won the admiration and cooperation of the international relief organizations. Unlike prior UN workers, he lived in Mogadishu, enduring the heat, mosquitoes, filth, lack of water, electricity, and basic comforts. [Said Geoffrey Loane of the Red Cross], "And he worked like hell. He worked seven days a week, constantly. He inspired all of us."]

"The agencies are ... keen sites of competition among national groups. There is a peculiarly European diplomatic game which involves engineering positions for one's countrymen in order to promote one's national interests; the ability to play this game is part of what makes those who work in the Geneva agencies slightly slicker, slightly smarter than their counterparts in New York. For no reason that anyone could explain, the Belgians, Swedes and Senegalese (who learned it from the French) are reckoned to have real influence in Geneva, meaning the ability to dispense jobs and control agency agendas."

Anne Applebaum, "An anarchy of abounding acronyms", The Spectator (UK), **12 November 1994**, pp. 9-11.

[Note: Ms. Applebaum, is also the author of, *inter alia*, a very well-received recent book, Gulag: A history, Doubleday, New York, 2003.]

"You have many terrific people who are overworked, and a lot of total incompetents whom no one ever got rid of because there was no procedure for getting rid of them' said Ronald I. Spiers, a former U.S. ambassador who served as UN under-secretary general for political affairs from 1989 to 1992.

The United Nations continues to attract hard-working idealists and missionaries for the cause of peace. But 'the most difficult thing is in shifting resources to meet shifting needs' said Joseph Connor, an American who formerly was chairman of Price Waterhouse ... and now is in charge of UN administration. Many job descriptions are written not by UN managers, but in horse trading among government delegates to the General Assembly."

'We are concerned about the degree to which member states seem to continue to regard the United Nations as a resting place for cast-off politicians' said Douglas Bennet, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs."

Julia Preston, "A world-class challenge: Upgrading UN's creaking bureaucracy", International Herald Tribune, **January 4, 1995**.

"The quality of UN staff is the question on which governments (often while negotiating contracts for their nationals under the table) are most critical, most hypocritical, and most fatalistic. A 1993 report on UNESCO [commented on] 'ethics in management of international organizations':

'It is a sad and frustrating experience to see how in the sensitive area of staff – high and low – unethical pressures are applied – contrary to agreed rules of the game – to obtain advantages of [a] political, personal, or prestige nature, by promoting openly and behind the scenes the cause of preferred individuals – international civil servants. These practices do not serve to inspire in the public ... respect and confidence in international governance.' ...

... From a purely administrative viewpoint, the 'international civil service' is a disgrace; lacking [any real career structure] ..., inflexible, underskilled and overmanned, and alien to the concepts of productivity or rewards for exceptional merit.

These defects have been extensively documented [since 1971] by the JIU ... outside expert groups ... testimony from serving and retired staff members ... and by ...indignant ... congressional committees. [Reform] proposals have drawn up ... [but] watered down ... and then ignored (with impunity) by UN executives."

Rosemary Righter, Utopia lost: The United Nations and world order, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, **1995**, p. 282. The quote included is from Fifth Report of the British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on Membership of UNESCO, Appendix 4, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, August 2, 1993.

"With a budgeting process as antiquated and arcane as the UN's, the dearth of training -- the key to instituting a truly cost-effective management culture -- is shocking. Managers often start out with no notion of how to administer their own office budgets. 'Management training', confined mostly to the UN's Performance Appraisal System, still takes a back seat to language-training programmes which dominate staff improvement time. Managerial expertise is but a faint consideration in the promotion of managers at any level, including the Secretary-General."

Morris B. Abram, "Save the UN", The Geneva Post, No. 9, **May 17-22, 1996**.

Note: Mr. Abram was a former permanent representative of the United States to the UN, and subsequently chairman of "UN-Watch".]

"OHRM will convene ... a task force of experts [to make a] 'clear delineation of responsibilities' [which] is expected to lead to a reduction in micro-management.

[The *IDR* then notes that] *Micromanagement by intergovernmental bodies is an index of the lack of trust between the majority of delegations and the UN Secretariat. ... [If this trend is to be reversed] there must be a much clearer conceptualization of change, a balanced explanation of implications, and an absolute sincerity of purpose. The current perception of the Secretariat among many delegations is that in terms of personnel policy it is confused, does not understand the full implications of what is proposed, and has a hidden agenda. ...*

In pushing for reorientation, Ms. Salim speaks some home truths... 'We can no longer assume that a [20-year] staff member has developed the necessary managerial and supervisory skills' ... there is 'widespread staff distrust of management' and the UN's 'organizational culture is one in which advancement is generally expected on the basis of longevity rather than performance.'"

"UN personnel chief reviewing all aspects of management in bid to simplify controls, delegate authority," International Documents Review, **16 February 1998**, p. 2. [emphasis added.]

"Challenges to implementation

... No amount of money or resources can substitute for the significant changes that are urgently needed in the culture of the Organization.

... 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.

"The Brahimi report implicitly criticizes the appointment of key peacekeeping personnel on geopolitical grounds, rather than on merit, and details how UN senior peacekeeping staff in the field -- civilian and military -- should prepare for duties. In the case of Sierra Leone, there is little evidence of any preparation at all. As the report states, 'Put simply, the UN is far from being a meritocracy today, and unless it takes steps to become one, it will not be able to reverse the alarming trend of qualified staff ... leaving the organization.' These are fighting words at the UN, where turf, national advantage, and every job are fought over and preserved with a vigor that belies the public image of UN torpor in most other respects. The UN is urged by the panel to create a standing pool of civilian personnel specializing in field service ... , in the absence of which inexperienced and untrained staff must start afresh in every peacekeeping operation, thus inevitably making many avoidable mistakes early on."

David M. Malone and Ramesh Thakur, "UN peacekeeping: Lessons learned?", Global Governance, 7 (2001), 11-17 [14].

"I hope to provide an 'inside story' which will allow the public to peer behind the facade... This is sorely needed because the UN's culture of 'self-justification' and 'self-exoneration' has disseminated so much propaganda about 'the accomplishments' of the system and how 'doomed' the world would be without it, that it has become extremely difficult for many people to see the organizations for what they are. This can only be done by dispelling a number of myths ...

Taxpayers and governments should no longer be duped into financing these institutions in their present form. They should only pay if these organizations become streamlined, efficient institutions, devoted to serving the international community; not corrupt, inefficient, disreputable bodies staffed mostly by deadwood incompetents living in grand style.

There are in fact a number of U.N. employees who, in one whole year, do not write one sentence for the Organization or spend one single hour working for it in any way, yet receive unbelievable salaries at the end of each month. Such a situation does not exist anywhere else in the world, not even in the bureaucracies of the least developed countries."

Houshang Ameri, Fraud, waste and abuse: Aspects of U.N. management and personnel policies, University Press of America, Lanham, MD (USA), **June 2003**, pp. viii-ix.

" ... after all these years, the United Nations is still struggling to adjust its human resources policies and practices to the reality that surrounds it. ...

... the profile of the international civil servant has changed over the years. To function effectively, the UN must be able to attract and retain people with a prominent professional track record, recruit them swiftly while they are still interested and available, compete with the private sector for their skills, give them control over the resources for which they are accountable, create an environment that favors learning and welcomes an honest mistake, give them opportunities to compete for advancement, and, in so doing, demonstrate that the [UN] Charter's insistence on staff of the highest caliber is no hollow phrase.

Several dilemmas that have crippled the UN for generations, however, remain unresolved, and this organizational pathology stands in the way of the UN's efforts to remain meaningful. [They include:]

- the persistent gap between its perennial promises to improve human resources management and its capacity to deliver; and
- Its obsession with cosmetic reforms, hiding the root causes of dysfunctionality.

For most pathologies, there is a cure. For the UN, faith healing will not suffice."

Dirk Salomons, "Good intentions to naught: The pathology of human resources management at the United Nations," in Dennis Dijkzeul, and Yves Beigbeder, eds., Rethinking international organizations: Pathology and promise, Berghahn, New York and Oxford, **2003**, pp. 111-139 [136-137].

For months, [US presidential candidate John Kerry] has advocated broader international oversight [in Iraq] that might open the door to additional peacekeeping contributions and generate some real support for nation-building there. Now he has begun to elaborate on how that oversight should be structured, drawing sensible lessons from successes and failures of the recent past.

Kerry recognizes that the United Nations cannot offer any magic bullet solutions for Iraq, and that working with the UN Secretary general, Kofi Annan, and his special representative Lakhdar Brahimi, cannot be a substitute for broad cooperation with all the major powers represented in the Security Council. ... Kerry also proposes designating an international high commissioner for Iraq whose office would be outside the barely functional, patronage-driven UN personnel system. That would permit the recruitment of a capable staff and create some safeguards against the kind of wholesale corruption that is alleged to have vitiated the UN's oil-for-food program in Iraq.

Kerry's ideas ... would be extremely hard to carry out now ... but they at least reflect a realistic view of what the United Nations -- and the United States -- can and cannot do.

"Kerry's vision for Iraq," International Herald Tribune, **May 7, 2004**

"[Sergio Vieira de Mello's death a year ago in the UN headquarters bombing in Baghdad] ... along with 22 of his colleagues ... stunned the United Nations and its staff ...

Why is the United Nations short on competent personnel to lead complex peacekeeping and political missions? ...

The answer is that there is a human resources crisis in the United Nations. An entrenched bureaucracy, fueled by counterproductive quotas, nepotism and outlandishly generous tenure policies, impedes the rise of talent and excellence through the ranks. ...

... This is why Annan was repeatedly compelled to rely on de Mello ... to undertake the three most delicate UN missions in recent times, sending him to Kosovo, East Timor and Iraq, all in a period of less than four years.

[The UN needs outstanding staff] .. with the requisite experience, competence, stature and charisma to manage the UN's presence in situations where thousands if not millions of lives

and livelihoods are at stake.

With the support of the Security Council, Annan must thoroughly reshape his work force to improve its caliber and reward talent. Only then could he be sure of a reliable pool of crisis managers ..."

Ludovic Hood, "Remembering de Mello: The UN must let talent rise", International Herald Tribune, **August 13, 2004**.

[Note: Mr. Hood served with the UNDP in East Timor from 2001-2004, and his article was a personal comment.]

"Sir David Vennis ... is to become the head of security at the United Nations ... as part of a thorough overhaul of the organisation's outdated security system. ...

In the wake of the [deadly attack on the UN's Baghdad headquarters in August 2003 the Ahtisaari report found] ... the UN's security system to be dysfunctional and subject to widespread mismanagement.

The appointment of Sir David is also happening within the broader context of personnel reforms within the UN as it reels from scandals in Iraq and Congo ...

Sir David ... [has] spent the last 10 years as commander of the most important specialist squads at Scotland Yard with responsibility for diplomatic and royal protection, security, and counter terrorism.

His operational experience and organizational skills have earned him respect around the world. ...

His appointment marks the first time the UN has had a counter-terrorist professional in charge of its security ...

After the inquiry into the Baghdad bombing, the then UN security chief Tun Myat was forced to resign."

Jimmy Burns and Mark Turner, "UN raids Scotland Yard for new security chief", Financial Times (UK), **January 7, 2005**.

[Note: The appointment of a top expert is needed in many areas of UN management instead of an "old boy", so this step is of extra significance and hopefully, and at long last, will become standard practice.]

Note: Much more detail on major aspects of UN personnel management and current developments is provided in the multiple archive subsections under OHR (Mis-)management .

Useful sources

(Note: informally assembled by IO Watch, roughly ranked from "most useful" on down, and subject to change as new sources are added)

Ameri, Houshang, Politics of staffing the United Nations Secretariat, Major Concepts in Politics and Political Theory, Vol. 8, Peter Lang, New York, 1996.

Ali, Aamir, "The international civil service": The idea and the reality" in de Cooker, Chris, ed., International administration: law and management practice in international organisations, UNITAR, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 1989, I.1, pp. 3-20.

Childers, Erskine, with Urquhart, Brian, Chapter X, "The international civil service", in "Renewing the United Nations System", Development Dialogue, 1994:1, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, 1994.

Joint Inspection Unit, "Inspection of the application of United Nations recruitment, placement, and promotion policies", Parts I and II, UN documents A/49/845 and A/51/656, 1995 and 1997.

Dijkzeul, Dennis, and Beigbeder, Yves, eds., Rethinking international organizations: Pathology and promise, Berghahn, New York and Oxford, 2003.

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