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The Unfinished Global Revolution: the Pursuit of a New International Politics - Mark Malloch-Brown

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Cover Page Footnote

Review

The Unfinished Global Revolution: The Pursuit of a New International Politics

Mark Malloch-Brown. New York: The Penguin Press, 2011. 272 pp.

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Several themes run throughout this book, in which Mark Malloch-Brown melds his personal experience as a British civil servant with his career as an international civil servant, working at various times at the World Bank, as the head of the United Nations Development Program, and UN Secretary-General's Kofi Annan's assistant. The central theme of the book revolves around the need for an effective system of global governance to cope with the major challenges which the international community faces in the age of globalization in the 21st century. Some of the problems involve the darker side of globalization, such as terrorism which was symbolized by the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11 and witnessed by Malloch-Brown while he was working in New York City at the UN Headquarters. Other critical problems are the growth in the world's population, which will result in overcrowded cities especially in the developing world; limits to the amount of natural resources (especially energy); continuing degradation of the environment (pollution of the environment as a result of economic growth); and the

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growth in trade which will benefit some of the developing countries, such as China, India and Brazil, more than the developed countries, although extreme economic inequality still exist in countries like India that are undergoing significant economic growth. Malloch-Brown sees an acceleration of these problems that the international community will face in the 21st century at a time when nationalism still remains as one of the most durable forces in the international community. Malloch-Brown also believes that the crash of 2008 was due to the lack of effective regulatory instruments of global governance. The problem has now returned in 2011 as a major crisis in the Eurozone, which threatens the viability of the European Union, and possibly the international financial system itself. Unfortunately, the dangers of insufficient regulation of the activities of banks and financial institutions in Europe, in 2010 and 2011, in connection with the crisis in the Euro-zone, underscored the dangers of the lack of an effective regulation of Franco-Belgian banks in the Euro-zone, which had become overexposed in lending money to a bankrupt Greece. In this case, the international institution which has failed to perform effectively was the European Union, perhaps undercutting Malloch-Brown's optimism of the EU's role as an instrument of global governance. At the root of the inability of the European Union to regulate the current crisis in the Eurozone, is the need for some of the richer, northern members of the EU such as Germany, to be willing to bail out the debt-ridden southern members of the organization.

A major theme in Malloch-Brown's book is his criticism of the incompetence of the United Nations, and its inability to deal with some of the major problems of the globalized world of the 21st century. Malloch-Brown argues that the failure of the UN to function as an effective instrument of global governance is due to the need to engage in a wholesale reform of the outmoded structure and practices of the world organization. In addition, the policies of the members of the UN also have constrained the UN's ability to deal with the effective resolution of such world problems as peace, and economic injustice, which involves the need to root out economic inequality and poverty, not only between states, but within them as well. Most importantly, according to Malloch-Brown, is the relationship which exists between the U.S. and the UN. U.S. support for the UN is essential if it is to function as an effective instrument for reconciling international order with international justice. The relationship between the U.S. and the United Nations suffered especially during the Bush administration, which had a tendency to view the UN as a marginalized non-state actor in the international system. Not surprisingly, U.S. /UN

relations were exacerbated in 2003, when the Bush administration failed to get the support that it wanted from the UN Security Council to provide legitimate cover for the invasion of Iraq. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's criticism of the war resulted in a rift between the U.S. and the UN. The opposition in the Security Council from France, Germany, Russia, and China certainly rankled the United States, although it may be a bit too much to say that. "The confrontation in the Security Council between the United States and the U.K. and most of the other members was probably the most damaging single event to which the UN had ever been subjected" (162). However, as Malloch-Brown points out, "Kofi Annan and those around him never doubted that the war under the terms that it was fought, was wrong" (161). Malloch-Brown argues that the Bush administration actually hated the UN, and this hatred was exemplified by the appointment of John Bolton as U.S. ambassador to the UN, whose tenure there was marked by a traditional conservative's distrust of the international institution. The relationship between Bolton and Malloch-Brown also reflected the antipathy of the U.S. towards the UN, as Bolton became Brown's nemesis in the organization. Furthermore, according to Malloch-Brown, Kofi Annan's efforts to implement major reforms of the UN's sclerotic bureaucracy also suffered from U.S. opposition. Brown is critical of the inadequacies of the United Nations and the fact that the policies of the national governments that belong to the UN also serve as a constraint on the ability of the UN to function effectively in the international system. But he concludes that the U.S. will play the key role in the emergence of any system of global governance which will meet the challenges of the 21st century (234).

The United Nations, according to Malloch-Brown, is in need of a second San Francisco, keeping in mind the fact that the UN was created at San Francisco in 1945. But Malloch-Brown is also wary of holding another San Francisco conference to engage in a reform of the structure and processes of the organization. He feels that this would open up a Pandora's box of a call for wide-ranging reforms, particularly on the part of the bulk of the membership of the UN, which would be staunchly resisted by the status quo powers. That would preclude the holding of the kind of international Charter review conference that was envisaged to take place in 1955, ten years after the formation of the UN. Apart from holding a review conference, it is very difficult to adopt formal amendments to the UN Charter, given the requirement that all amendments must also be approved by the UN Security Council, which means that any one of the five permanent

members of the Council could block an amendment to the Charter through the exercise of its right of the veto. That is why the only amendments that have actually been adopted by the UN have dealt with enlarging the size of the Security Council from 11 to 15, by increasing the number of non-permanent members from 6 to 10. The other amendments to the UN Charter dealt with increasing the size of the Economic and Social Council from 18 to 54. There also have been what might be viewed as informal amendments to the Charter, given the difficulty of adopting a formal amendment. One example of this is "The Uniting for Peace Resolution," which was adopted in 1950 377(V) and which allows an issue which is blocked by a P-5 veto, to be taken out of the Security Council on a procedural vote, and turned over to an emergency session of the General Assembly. Interestingly enough, Malloch-Brown does not engage in a discussion of the various "informal amendments" to the UN Charter, which have developed in kind of an organic fashion.

The most important area of UN reform deals with the distribution of permanent seats in the Security Council, and the right of the veto, which represents a form of weighted voting. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union would not have joined the UN without this special voting right. The current P-5 members have been there since 1945 (with the exception of Russia succeeding to the seat of the former Soviet Union), and the P-5 are listed by name in Article 23 of the UN Charter, which means that a change in the distribution of permanent seats in the Security Council requires an amendment of the Charter. The United Kingdom and France would have to make room for Germany and Italy. The current distribution of permanent membership in the Security Council does not reflect the changes which have occurred in the international system outside of the framework of the United Nations, such as the rise of new centers of influence and emerging powers such as the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries, along with South Africa, which is changing the financial architecture of the international system. However Malloch-Brown stresses that smaller countries might resent the allocation of permanent seats to some of the bigger powers such as Nigeria and South Africa(193). Although Malloch-Brown is not very optimistic about the expansion of permanent seats in the Security Council, since this may not provide a cure for what he considers to the outmoded procedures of the organ, he suggests what is needed is a return to the principles of collective security on which the United Nations was founded (199). However, it may not be possible to return to a system that has not worked, and perhaps it

would be better to incorporate a new chapter 6 and ½ in the Charter, based on the lessons learned from over 60 years' experience in peacekeeping.

Although Malloch-Brown is concerned with enhancing the ability of the UN to deal with traditional national security problems that are associated with the Westphalian international system, he also focuses on the human dimension of security, or security which is more "people-oriented." An important step in the direction of shifting the focus of the UN in the direction of human security took place in 1994 with the introduction of the first Human Development Report, which has subsequently been published every year, organized around a different theme. Also, Malloch-Brown argues that the adoption by the UN of the Millennium Development Goals represents one of the most important benchmarks and efforts at reform in the history of the United Nations, and even though the target of cutting poverty in half by the year 2015 may not be realized, progress in some areas such as global health has occurred. For example, the success which the UN enjoyed in persuading the multinational drug companies to reduce the cost of medicine for HIV/Aids victims is an example of what could be accomplished when the Bush administration, multinational pharmaceutical companies representing the private business sector, and non-governmental organizations all worked together to promote global health. Malloch-Brown, perhaps somewhat too optimistically, places a great deal of faith in the ability of international civil society to create along with other state and non-state actors, an effective system of global governance.

However, one could say that Malloch-Brown was also prescient in supporting the publication of a controversial Arab Human Development report by UNDP, which stressed the need for democracy promotion in the Middle East. The Arab Spring, fueled by democratic popular revolts that swept across the region in 2011 bringing down non-democratic regimes in Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia is evidence of his foresight in drawing attention to this dimension of human security.

In conclusion, a sense of Kantian cosmopolitanism pervades Malloch-Brown's book as he attempts to sketch out the parameters of a global governance infrastructure to meet the challenges of a globalizing planet. The Millennium Development Goals, he argues, could serve as the basis for a new global social contract. Critical to the future of global governance is the extent to which the UN can be effectively reformed so that it can play a leadership role in this process. In the final analysis, it remains to be seen whether or not governments jealous of their national sovereignty would be willing to accept a

form of global etatism, which admittedly is emerging both formally and informally in an ad hoc fashion in response to the needs of global society.