

Reaching Out to the World: Translations of and Study Guides for a Seminal Work on UN Reform

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Introduction:

On 23 September 2015 the World Government Research Network posted on its website a lengthy summary of my book, *Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World*, published by the United Nations University Press in October 2013. Reactions to the book from friends and colleagues proved to be remarkably favorable. They validated, I believe, the twenty encomiums included in the book's front matter. In fact, shortly prior to publication, my editor at the UNU Press wrote to me as follows: "*I don't think we've ever had a book with so much praise and backing and from such a prestigious group of endorsers.*" (e.g. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Thomas Pickering, Johan Galtung, Tom Weiss). I hope that readers of this essay will indulge my shamelessness for quoting extensively in what follows some of the statements in question and excuse the personal tone of much of this essay.

Convinced that the book would be of worldwide interest to politically engaged individuals – including laypersons as well as scholars and diplomats – The Workable World Trust (WWT), founded by the present writer in 2014, commissioned translations of the work into Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, six of which were completed in 2016. Completion of the Japanese edition is anticipated within the next few months.

As work on most of the translations approached completion, it occurred to Nancy Dunlavy, who succeeded me as Director of the Trust in December 2016, that, apart from the full-length version of the book, there would be substantial worldwide interest among faculty and students in international relations programs and in adult study and discussion groups to warrant the production, in English and other major world languages, of a relatively simple *Study and Discussion Guide*. We envision that such a guide will provide unprecedented opportunities for international – and possibly even global – dialogues on global governance among lay citizens, and that such dialogues might actually influence receptive governments in their quest for a more workable world. In a matter of just a few months, Nancy and I produced the needed English-language guide. The WWT then entered into contracts with the producers of the book

translations to translate the guide as well. Work is already well along on several of the translations; the one in Chinese has already been completed and awaits editing.

In what follows, I will indicate the essential approach and content of the original book, discuss problems related to its distribution, say a bit more about the translations and study guides, and invite the assistance of readers of this essay in helping to disseminate ideas relating to the creation of a more workable world.

Approach and Content of the Book:

The following endorsements of the book are relevant:

This contribution of Professor Schwartzberg will be an essential reference work for all those who are concerned with the future of a new United Nations.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations

This volume lucidly and intelligently presents a sweeping series of new, innovative ideas designed to reform the United Nations structure and performance. From weighted voting to the constructive use of regional representation, from new institutions to more effective use of existing ones, readers will find a rich mother lode to change and challenge current thinking. This book is a rare compendium of forward-looking ideas to structure closer world cooperation.

Thomas Pickering, Former US Ambassador to the United Nations and former US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs

It is a joy and a privilege to read a manuscript by Joseph Schwartzberg, replete with common sense approaches and pragmatic solutions. Anyone who reads him understands how obstacles can be overcome – one by one. United Nations reform is inescapable – not utopian. Indeed, world peace requires reform of global institutions and strengthening of the rule of law, nationally and internationally

Alfred M. de Zayas, United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, and Professor of International Law, Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations

For believers in just governance, progressive democratization of the United Nations system is an essential process. The many innovative proposals put forward in this wonderful book point the way to a better governed world.

Johan Galtung, Professor of Peace Studies and founder of Transcend International

. . . Most proposals regarding the reform of the United Nations system are overly concerned about what is feasible, at the expense of what is ideal. Professor Schwartzberg's formidable

work corrects that systemic bias, and shuttles between the feasible and the ideal with elegance and rigor.

Hakan Altinay, Former non-resident Senior Fellow of the Brookings Institution, Global Ethics Fellow of the Carnegie Council and President of the Global Civics Academy

No one has thought longer or harder than Joe Schwartzberg about the challenges of designing a fairer and better world order. This book is an essential contribution to a long overdue conversation, not only about United Nations reform, but, more broadly, about what passes for our current system (or rather non-system) of global governance.

Thomas G. Weiss, Director Emeritus, Ralph Bunche Institute of International Studies, City University of New York and past President of the Academic Council on the United Nations System and of the International Studies Association

To recapitulate some of the key points made above:

- The scope of the analysis is exceedingly broad.
- The ideas promoted are well researched and highly innovative, yet common sense recommendations.
- The recommendations are pragmatic and politically achievable.
- The approach successfully blends idealism with realism.
- The recommendations will move global governance in an increasingly democratic direction.
- The work will serve as a general reference for promoters of global governance reform.

Fundamental Premises:

The work is predicated on a number of fundamental premises, among which the following are of particular importance:

- The design of decision-making systems has a great bearing on the legitimacy and workability of the decisions that they make.
- Given the enormous variations among nations in respect to population and economic capacity, it is necessary to replace the one-nation-one-vote principle of decision-making with weighted voting systems appropriate for the tasks that various agencies within the United Nations system perform. These systems should employ simple mathematical formulae and should be applied uniformly to all UN Member nations. In general, such formulae should provide

a reasonable balance between the interests of stakeholders (those affected by specific decisions) and shareholders (those who bear the burden of implementing those decisions). Some twenty formulae are indicated in the text.

- Legitimate governance must provide as many stakeholders as possible – governmental as well as non-governmental – with a meaningful voice. In particular, there is need for the empowerment of women and indigenous people.
- Multi-national regional organizations must be nurtured and provided with enhanced opportunities to play meaningful roles in global governance.
- The law of force must yield to the force of law.
- The greatest obstacles to reform are political inertia, fear, lack of political will and imagination, and the continuing, nearly universal adherence to the anachronistic, dysfunctional Westphalian principle of unbridled national sovereignty. To quote Seneca, *“It is not because it is difficult that we are afraid to act; it is because we are afraid to act that it is difficult.”*

Specific Recommendations:

Space limitations preclude a full list – much less explanations for – the scores of reform recommendations that the book puts forward, some for improvements in existing agencies, others for the creation of new agencies. A few of the more important proposals are indicated below:

- Devising a system of weighted voting in the UN General Assembly that would allow the adoption of legally binding decisions.
- Creating and progressively democratizing a World Parliamentary Assembly that would function as a second UN legislative chamber.
- Creating a universally representative, veto-free Security Council, based largely on the creation of regional caucuses, with realistically weighted voting.
- Greatly expanding and strengthening the judicial component of global governance.
- Establishing five civil society coordinating councils to allow NGO input in regard to policies relating to: peace and security, human rights, the environment, development, and democratic governance.
- Creating a standing, UN-controlled, all-volunteer, globally recruited, elite Peace Corps capable of responding on short notice to breaches of the peace anywhere in the world.

- Establishing a UN Administrative Reserve Corps, trained in a multi-campus UN Administrative Academy to create a body of readily available middle-level administrators to reestablish workable civil administrative systems in the wake of peacekeeping missions.
- Promotion of the “common heritage” principle applicable to the high seas, the atmosphere, outer space, Antarctica, and other spaces that are, or ought to be outside the sovereignty of individual nations.
- Devising a simpler, fairer, and more rewarding UN revenue system.
- As a long-term goal, the establishment of an indirectly elected and regionally representative, plural executive.

I do not suggest that any of my recommendations is the best that can be devised. Rather, I seek to demonstrate that one can devise decision-making bodies than can effectively address fundamental global needs. Others may well devise even more worthy proposals. If so, all the better. Nor do I presume that there is any obvious best sequencing of reform initiatives or any most promising path to a more workable world. I do, however, suggest a set of five enabling conditions in my concluding chapter, “Getting There.”

The Problem of Distribution:

One might suppose, given the endorsements quoted above and the urgency of the issues discussed, that my book would be – as academic texts go – a best seller. Far from it! Two months after publishing my work, the UNU Press closed down for lack of funding. There was no budget for advertising and few published reviews. The chief responsibility for North American sales was turned over to the Brookings Institution Press, but, in addition to my work, Brookings has several thousand other titles in its inventory. (Purchasing information will be provided below.)

Furthermore, relatively few political scientists or international relations scholars have the foggiest notion of who I am. I presume that most of their discretionary reading time is devoted to keeping abreast of the torrent of academic publications put forward by the many luminaries in their respective disciplines. I am most certainly not in that charmed circle.

My own principal academic specialties were in the geography of South Asia, political geography and the history of cartography. I have published extensively in each of these fields. Since my official retirement in 2000, however, my work has gravitated toward political advocacy and my writing has been mainly for citizen activists and policy shapers.

In my not-quite-ninety years, I have accumulated an extraordinary wealth of experience that imparts a sense of reality to my thinking and writing. I have indulged little in theorizing. My focus has always been on the messy, real world on which we now depend and on the even more

complex, interdependent world that our children and grandchildren will inherit. From 1953 to 1956, I spent nearly three continuous years traveling around the world and have by now visited roughly 100 countries on every continent. My contacts with non-Western cultures and economically disadvantaged societies have been extensive. I bicycled more than 10,000 miles in India during two years of field work in hundreds of Indian villages. In 1979-80, I taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. And in 1996, I was one of the founders of the Kashmir Study Group (comprised mainly of retired career diplomats and senior academics) that attempted, over a period of several years, to bring about a peaceful resolution of the multi-partite Kashmir dispute. These experiences have helped shaped my worldview and inform the content of my work.

Despite my relative lack of political prominence, I am convinced that my book contains scores of badly needed and important insights relevant to global governance. These insights, I believe, merit additional investments of my limited remaining lifetime (of which I am acutely conscious), energy and finance. So motivated, I legally established the previously noted Workable World Trust, and am in the process of endowing it with most of my not inconsiderable life savings.

Book Translations and Study Guides:

As noted in the introduction to this essay, the Trust commissioned translations of my book, as well as a much briefer (70 pages in English) and somewhat simpler *Study and Discussion Guide*, into Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. The usual contractual procedure provided for having the work delivered in installments for vetting by a competent translation reviewer. The reviewers would then pass on their critical comments to the translators and, after due consultation and revision (if needed), attest to the completeness, accuracy and stylistic appropriateness of the work. Finished manuscripts were then to be forwarded to two Trust assistants, one to deal with proper insertion of the book's abundant graphics, the other to oversee miscellaneous additional formatting issues. All seven translations, of both the book and the study guide, should be completed within the next few months.

The study guides, we believe, are attractive, reader-friendly and pedagogically sound. They should meet the needs of faculty and students in many courses in international relations classes, as well as those of a variety of potential non-academic discussion groups. Each guide is comprised of 15 units, one for each chapter of the book itself. The general approach for each unit is to specify briefly at the outset why the subject is important, to explain the key issues in somewhat greater detail, to pose one or more sets of discussion questions, and to suggest solutions to the key problems revealed.

The Trust is presently exploring options for making the translated e-editions of the book and study guides in languages other than English available at the most economical cost. It also anticipates being able to present a free copy of the latter with every purchase of a copy (print or e-edition) of the book itself.

We see an enormous potential for using the book and study guide in tandem and even, should that prove unfeasible, for using the study guide alone. For the first time, arguably, it should soon be possible to organize **virtual worldwide conversations among reasonably well-educated individuals and civil society organizations on needed improvements in global governance**. It is also possible that the concerns and hopes expressed in some of those conversations will be picked up by decision makers in relatively progressive countries and serve as catalysts for further discussions at a diplomatic level. The logistics involved would, of course, be daunting, and recommendations as to how to facilitate the process and aid in its execution will be welcome.

There are already, or soon will be, a number of ways by which to obtain the book and the accompanying guide:

Schwartzberg, Joseph E.: *Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2013.

- The softcover English edition is available at <https://www.brookings.edu/book/transforming-the-united-nations-system/>. This same webpage also provides links to the English e-book that is being sold by Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Apple iTunes.

- The Spanish e-book version is currently available at <https://www.amazon.com/>; other non-English editions will become available via various book distributors later this year.

Transforming the United Nations System: Study and Discussion Guide

- The English edition is now available at <http://www.workableworld.org/>

- Ordering information for the non-English language editions of the guide will be available from this link later this year.

The Workable World Trust, <http://www.workableworld.org/>

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