Commission on GLOBAL SECURITY JUSTICE & GOVERNANCE

Background Paper

Strengthening Security, Justice, and Democracy Globally: The Case for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly

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Abstract

While the Inter-Parliamentary Union has increasingly claimed for itself the space of a United Nations 'parliamentary dimension,' questions persist around whether it can fully play important representation and oversight roles at the global level. On balance, it is concluded here, a standing, initially consultative UN parliamentary assembly would be the better option, with the IPU serving as a complementary institution. A key interim step toward developing a standing parliamentary body could be the creation of a Parliamentary Network on the United Nations.

About the author

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1. Introduction

Efforts to create a global 'parliamentary dimension' to complement diplomatic, state-to-state relations are older than the United Nations (1945-present), and in fact older by several decades than the League of Nations (1920-46). They can be dated at least to the 1889 founding of the Inter-Parliamentary Union which, like the two multilateral bodies, was aimed at promoting peace through interstate dialogue – in the IPU's case, a dialogue between the directly elected representatives of democratic peoples. Questions have long been raised, however, around whether a union of elected *national* representatives can truly fill the space of a *global* parliamentary dimension. Such questions are seen by many as particularly pressing today, in an age of intense economic interdependence, when collective decisions with potentially far-reaching impact for individuals within states are increasingly taken beyond the state.

This background paper assesses arguments for formalizing a global parliamentary dimension, with an emphasis on proposals to create a standing United Nations parliamentary assembly. It concludes that even an initially purely consultative UN assembly would have the potential to make important contributions to the promotion of security and justice in the UN system and possibly beyond it. Such a body would be a better candidate to fill the space of a formal UN parliamentary dimension – the one to genuinely represent the 'We the Peoples of the United Nations' featured in the UN Charter -- than the IPU. The latter has increasingly sought to claim the role for itself but faces severe structural constraints stemming from its nature as an organization composed of sitting parliamentarians.

The discussion is structured as follows: Section 1 details some past efforts to incorporate a parliamentary dimension into interstate politics. Section 2 addresses some foundational questions around justifying democracy, and connections between political participation, security and justice, that often are neglected in discussions of why democracy should move beyond the state. Section 3 discusses models proposed for a formal global parliamentary dimension, including one featuring the Inter-Parliamentary Union. On balance, it is concluded, given structural shortcomings of an interparliamentary model and the distinct and potentially important roles a parliamentary body could play within the UN system, there is a strong case to be made for developing a UN parliamentary assembly. Section 4 considers some further objections to the UN parliament idea, and Section 5 concludes with a discussion of possible next steps, including potential challenges and pathways to implementation.

2. Background: The Durable Idea of a Parliamentary Dimension for World Politics

2.1 Definitions

It will be important, first, to have a clear working sense of how such terms as democracy and 'parliamentary dimension' are to be defined. Democracy will be understood very broadly, as a collective decision making process among persons who have formally equal standing to participate. Such a definition turns on the question, 'who decides,' rather than precisely how they decide. That is, in a democracy, some meaningful political decisions are made by the most numerous part of an equally empowered group of participants, or by their elected representatives, rather than exclusively by a monarch or small, powerful group of oligarchs, etc.

A parliamentary assembly will be understood as a standing body of representatives which has three primary roles: representation, oversight and legislation (see Beetham 2006).[1] Its members represent the interests of those in their constituencies, they produce laws that apply to all persons within the body's jurisdiction, and they have formal powers of scrutiny and investigation in relation especially to the executive. In terms of representation, typically in proposals for creating a world parliament, a central claim has been that states' executives are well represented in global politics, but that the voice of the people's more direct representatives is absent or too far muted to adequately convey their views and exercise oversight functions on their behalf. Thus, the arguments have run, even if it is not possible in the very near term to create some formal or binding global parliamentary body, it is important to work toward the development of a *parliamentary dimension* for global politics and governance.

Such a dimension is characterized by dialogue between parliamentary representatives from various states, and typically efforts by them to influence state- or executive-led coordination and governance processes beyond the nation state. Kissling (2011) identifies more than 100 interparliamentary institutions or ongoing projects seeking to play such roles (see also Sabic 2008). These vary greatly by purpose and level of formal institutionalization.[2] For definitional purposes here, the most important distinction will be between:

a) *International Parliamentary Organizations:* these are composed of representatives serving in national legislatures and meeting with their counterparts as part of an official delegation from their national body to an international forum (see Kissling 2011, Ch. 3). The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an exemplar.

b) *Suprastate Parliamentary Bodies:* These are composed of parliamentarians who are solely attached to the suprastate body. The European Parliament is an exemplar. A directly elected or selected (for example, by national parliaments) world parliament also would fall into this category.

Other distinctions are discussed below, in the context of whether the Inter-Parliamentary Union should be seen as a good candidate for filling the space of a *formal* parliamentary dimension for the United Nations. A formal body would be one expressly tasked with oversight roles, and perhaps with a specified pathway to enhancing its legislative or rule-making influence over time. Typically also it is envisioned as a body created by a vote of the General Assembly.[3]

2.2 Historical Background

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, as noted, was the pioneer institution seeking to promote more secure and just international relations through adding a distinctively parliamentary dimension to global politics. Though it played a relatively marginal role in world affairs for much of the 20th century, it has become increasingly integrated into some areas of UN governance in recent years,

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[1] The term 'world parliament' has been most common in the literature, and parliament is understood here as a generic term for a standing legislative body.

[2] Kissling identifies four major types of international parliamentary institutions, along with some sub-types.

[3] A number of UN assembly advocates have noted that a UN parliamentary assembly could be created without a Charter amendment, by majority vote under Charter Article 22, which states that "The General Assembly may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions," (Segall 1991; Heinrich 1992, 26; Childers and Urquhart 1994, 178). Several other UN subsidiary bodies have been created by that means, though typically by consensus. As Bummel (2010[2005]) notes, it is not clear whether a UNPA would require consensus, majority, or two-thirds majority backing under an Article 22 motion. That would likely be a point of negotiation with and among member states, were a second assembly to receive formal consideration.

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and it will be central to the story here. The IPU was founded by two prominent peace activist parliamentarians, William Randal Cremer of the United Kingdom and Frederic Passy of France (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014a), and it made significant contributions to the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 -- though some members' 1907 hopes for a standing 'congress of nations' along the lines of the later League of Nations did not come to pass (see Sabic 20008, 264).

The outbreak of World War I was a blow to IPU peace aims, and the organization was notably not integrated into the structure of the League of Nations. Germany had in fact offered a formal proposal to include among League organs a separate World Parliament (Pollock 1920, 221). The Parliament would have exercised significant influence over League governance, including its budget, appointment of officials, and in "the establishment of generally valid international legal standards," (Pollock 1920, 221; see Bummel 2010, 27). It had little chance of passage, not least because Germany was not even permitted to join the League until 1926. It is noteworthy here, however, as an early attempt to formalize a parliamentary dimension at the global level.

The advance of World War II not only spelled the end for an already shaky League of Nations, it sparked renewed debate around the kind of global organization that could actually ensure peaceful and just relations between states. In fact, a wide array of scientists, intellectual and political leaders advocated at this time the creation of a strongly empowered world government. This was especially the case in the aftermath of the August 1945 US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when it became clear to many that destructive capacity had far outpaced any global political capacity to rein it in (see Einstein 2007[1946]). Some prominent calls also were made for formalizing a global parliamentary dimension. These came not from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which had fallen mostly dormant during the war, staging no annual Assembly from 1940-47, but from leading figures within democratic states. In November 1945, for example, UK Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin told the House of Commons that a study should be commissioned on creating a democratic global people's assembly for the newly formed United Nations Organization (Bevin 1945; see Childers and Urquhart 1994, 176-77).

Bevin soon after scaled back his ambitions to a union of Western countries, and the onset of the Cold War very quickly dampened hopes for the transformation of the UN into a stronger *governing* body, or the incorporation of a strong, formal parliamentary dimension into UN governance. Instead, the organization retained its initial governing structure, in which each member-state's delegate is offered a single vote in an essentially consultative General Assembly, and where much of the organization's actual influence is wielded within the Security Council (see Hassler 2008).

2.3 The Expansion of Interparliamentary Institutions

The same period, however, saw initial steps toward the development of some significant international parliamentary institutions. These included the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, the first parliamentary assembly formally attached to an intergovernmental organization. The Council, which now has 47 state members, is perhaps best known for its 1953 European Convention on Human Rights, the foundational document for the European Court of Human Rights.[4] The Council's Parliamentary Assembly now includes more than 300 members, and it has mostly advisory powers to the state members' foreign ministers (Sabic 2008; see Lobey 2014). Also noteworthy, a few years after the Council's creation, the East-West tensions which spurred the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization gave rise to the North Atlantic Assembly – now NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2014).

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[4] The Council is not part of the European Union structure, though the EU's 2009 Lisbon Treaty sought to formalize some links by stating that the EU as a body would accede to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Most notably, however, what is now the European Parliament – the most significant suprastate parliamentary body -- was launched in 1952 as the interparliamentary Common Assembly for the six member states of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Its members were initially appointed by national parliaments rather than popularly elected, and their role was solely consultative. As European integration progressed, however, and amid concerns about addressing a suprastate 'democratic deficit,' the development and involvement of the assembly progressed as well. It became the European Parliament in 1962, and in 1979, citizens of the European Communities' then-7 member states were permitted to directly elect their Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for the first time. The Parliament, which now counts more than 750 MEPs from 28 member states, has gradually assumed strong formal powers of co-decision, including on budgetary matters, binding legislation in a range of issue areas and over some key appointments (see European Parliament 2012; Hix and Hoyland 2013). In other words, it now exercises at the regional level many of the powers proposed for the 'world parliament' in the German scheme for the League of Nations.

Other regional bodies include the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), representing citizens of six member states of the Central American Integration System (SICA). They also are directly elected, though with comparatively fewer legislative powers. The African Union's Pan African Parliament (Nzewi 2013) and Mercosur in South America (Lucci 2013) both also have committed to adding legislative functions and moving toward direct election of representatives in the near term. Thus they have committed to becoming suprastate parliamentary bodies as well. Other, more fundamentally international bodies, or international parliamentary organizations, include the Arab Interparliamentary Union, ones attached to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Nordic Council, Benelux, Andean Parliament, CARICOM, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and such inter-regional ones as the Joint Parliamentary Assembly for the European Union and the 78 members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

Finally, we can note interparliamentary bodies attached to intergovernmental organizations, in particular the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, founded in 2000 and comprised of sitting parliamentarians from member states who, in a consultative role, seek to promote transparency and oversight of Bank and IMF activities. A more informal Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization, organized jointly by the IPU and European Parliament, has staged several meetings alongside WTO trade talks and separately since 2003, with earlier ad hoc meetings dating to the 1999 Seattle ministerial (World Trade Organization 2014).

Each of these organizations seeks to extend parliamentary representation in some meaningful way beyond the state, and in most cases also to extend parliamentary oversight and accountability functions. As such, they represent a young, still developing but perhaps surprisingly robust effort to populate a suprastate parliamentary dimension.

2.4 The Current Inter-Parliamentary Union

The IPU, despite the loss of the United States as a member in 1999 and persistent challenges related to its overall relevance,[5] has once more assumed a central place in questions pertaining to a global parliamentary dimension, in particular within the UN system. The union's leadership in fact now

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[5] See Bromund (1999) for a critique of the IPU. The United States formally withdrew from the union in 1999, citing low participation by US lawmakers.

claims for the IPU the space of a UN parliamentary dimension,[6] while at the same time it rejects claims that there is a need for a standing, consultative UN assembly.

The IPU, which now stands at 151 state members, has vigorously pursued closer involvement with the UN since the mid-1990s. The General Assembly approved a formal cooperation agreement between the two organizations in 1996, aimed at "allowing them to cooperate more closely in undertaking joint efforts in particular areas of their activities for the benefit of mankind" (UN General Assembly 1996). The IPU was then granted Permanent Observer status at the United Nations in 2002, meaning that it would have access to most UN meetings and documents, and it has been permitted to circulate its documents freely to member states at meetings of the UN General Assembly.

IPU members were integrally involved in events around the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) efforts, and the Union has staged several conferences of national parliamentary leaders at UN headquarters since 2000, as well as a number of 'Parliamentary Hearings,' where hundreds of parliamentarians come to share views on major UN undertakings, for example, the Sustainable Development Goals, slated to replace the MDGs after 2015 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014b). Since 2007, the IPU has had a Standing Committee on UN Affairs. And, the union, which notably did not move from its Geneva headquarters to New York at the founding of the UN, now also maintains a UN affairs office in New York. I discuss below the case for accepting or rejecting the IPU as *the* UN parliamentary dimension.

2.5 Campaigns for a UN Parliamentary Body

Finally, I will note two recent efforts toward creating a suprastate parliamentary body for the UN. These include the campaign by the International Network for a UN Second Assembly (INFUSA) of 1988 to 1995, and the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (2007-present). Both were inspired by an influential written argument for a UN parliament (Segall 1982 and Heinrich 2010[1992]). The INFUSA effort initially involved an annual call for the UN to commission a study – similar to UK Foreign Secretary Bevin's 1945 proposal – on a UN second assembly. It would be a body designed as "a deliberative organ concerned from a global standpoint with problems and aspirations common to all peoples of the world" (Segall 1991, 95). The assembly as proposed would have been solely consultative, but with a mandate to give greater voice to global civil society and select its representatives from that sector, not from domestic parliaments.

By 1989, INFUSA had joined its efforts to those of several other organizations under the umbrella Campaign for a Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN). It staged major conferences in New York, Vienna and San Francisco, and at its height comprised a coalition of more than 100 national and international non-governmental organizations. Proposals put forth by the campaign became more ambitious and expansive, including abolishing the Security Council veto. Especially in its early days, the campaign had the attention of some UN Secretariat officials (Segall 1991), but its proposals ultimately were not taken up, and it gradually dissolved.

The ongoing Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly has followed a somewhat different strategy, seeking to generate support among national parliamentarians for a suprastate parliamentary body at the UN. The Berlin-based secretariat of the campaign, headed by Andreas Bummel, has organized major conferences in several countries. It has received endorsements from more than 1,400 current and former parliamentarians from 100-plus countries, as well in general

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[6] The organization's web site states that it "works closely with the United Nations and other multilateral bodies to ensure there is a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation, global governance as well as in the resolution of major international issues." http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm

support for a UN assembly from the European Parliament (European Parliament 2011). It also has been endorsed in public statements by Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, appointed in 2012 by the UN Human Rights Council as the first United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order (De Zayas 2014, 21, para.62).

Campaign supporters tout a 2007 survey, commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation, in which 12,000 persons across 15 countries were asked: "How likely would you be to support a Global Parliament, where votes are based on country population sizes, and the global parliament is able to make binding policies?' Around 14 percent said they would support it without reservations, and 23 percent with reservations (British Broadcasting Corporation 2007).[7]

The Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly represents certainly one of the most sophisticated efforts to create such a body, and it has gained significant support. Yet, before we can determine whether its proposal, or some alternative, would be the most appropriate fit in a global parliamentary dimension, we must consider some more fundamental questions. These include in particular what democracy is understood to be 'for.' In other words, questions of appropriate democratic form will be heavily influenced by answers to questions about democratic function. This is far from a dry academic matter. It will have strong implications for the sorts of democratic institutions that should be created at all levels, the participatory practices that should be pursued, and the practical compromises – for example, on how strictly 'democratic equality' is to be understood -- that might be justifiably made in the interest of achieving some important justice and security aims at the global level.

3. Security, Justice and the Functions of Democracy

What, then, is democracy for? What justifies this form of rule, where the most numerous faction is able to bind others to its will, or that of its elected representatives? Two main types of answers or approaches can be identified. In shorthand, these are the 'respect' and 'protect' approaches. Respect approaches focus on some innate human interest or virtue that should be respected and/or enabled. Many democratic theorists argue, for example, that if we are not granted democratic participation, then our individual autonomy, our ability to lead a self-chosen life, is not being shown adequate respect (see Dahl 1989, 119-31). This sort of claim, in fact, underpins much recent discussion of a global 'democratic deficit' and many theoretical arguments for global democracy as a means of addressing it (see Held 1995, 145-56; Archibugi 2008, 57-58).

A fundamental problem with such arguments, however, is in demonstrating that democratic participation actually enables autonomy or other virtues. In autonomy terms, it simply hasn't been enabled for those on the losing side. If they are persistent losers – embedded in a societal group that will continually find itself in the democratic minority – then democracy isn't enabling them to lead a self-chosen life. It's simply requiring them to follow majority will (see Dworkin 2000, Ch. 4; Caney 2005, 155). The problem follows respect approaches to the global level. Individual autonomy is said to be threatened by processes of globalization which have shifted much decision-making beyond the state without also shifting democratic decision making there. Yet, presuming a global democratic body eventually would have some binding powers of legislation and oversight, its functioning could create many more persistent democratic minorities across states. Participatory majority rule, despite its many other virtues, does not *necessarily* make all participants free or enable them to lead self-chosen lives. Thus, it is incoherent to claim that global democratic institutions are needed

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[7] The survey did not specify the range of governance areas in which such a body's decisions would be binding, and overall the results can be taken only as indicative rather than conclusive. The author is pursuing a more comprehensive survey project on possible global institutional forms.

because all domestic democratic citizens have been robbed of the ability to exercise autonomy through decisive democratic participation.

'Protect' approaches, by contrast, focus more broadly on ways in which democratic participation rights – among others -- can help individuals better protect their own core interests. These could be expressed as vital interests corresponding to widely acknowledged rights – to life, bodily integrity, fair social and economic opportunities (Sen 1999, 7-8; Buchanan 2004, 142-47; Christiano 2011; Cabrera 2014b), or broader interests such as ones in avoiding domination by others (Weinstock 2006). Democratic participation, along with related accountability mechanisms common in constitutional democracies, including rights to challenge through courts, ombuds offices, protest, and rights to freedom of speech and press, are seen as vital to helping individuals protect their core interests.

Such an instrumental approach to justifying democracy connects at a foundational level to concerns with promoting security and justice. Democracy is seen primarily as a means of fostering more just outcomes for individuals, offering them tools to help in improving the transparency, quality and effectiveness of the legislative process, and overall to promote the protection of their own core interests or rights. That is, it would not necessarily insist on one-person, one-vote democratic equality in the near term. Rather, it would be concerned with enhancing the representation of all persons' interests in security and justice at the global level by the available means.

4. Does Form Follow Function to a UN Parliamentary Assembly?

If a primary *function* of democratic participation is to promote security and justice through better enabling individuals collectively to protect their vital interests, then what is the feasible institutional *form* that could best help realize that function in the current global system? I will consider three possible forms or approaches here. These are:

a) Consolidating the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union within the United Nations

b) Creating an independent world parliamentary body, possibly through an initial treaty involving current democracies

c) Launching a UN parliamentary assembly

Some objections to each option will naturally arise and be addressed in the course of the discussion.

4.1 Closer UN Ties for the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Is the present Inter-Parliamentary Union an appropriate form for filling the space of a formal UN parliamentary dimension? We can note again that in recent years, especially under Anders Johnsson, IPU Secretary General from 1998 until July 2014, the organization has developed a much closer relationship with the United Nations. As noted, the IPU has now staked its claim on the UN parliamentary dimension, and indeed more. In its 2012-17 Strategic Plan, the union states that one of its key objectives is to:

> Develop a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions. … The IPU provides a parliamentary input to the work of the United Nations, as well as the beginnings of parliamentary oversight and accountability. The IPU is establishing a strategic partnership with the United Nations and is seeking to develop similar relationships with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods Institutions (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2012, 19)

Of particular note here is the IPU's implicit claim that it is the appropriate organization to play the oversight and accountability role customarily assumed by a parliament. The organization's leadership, however, is firm that it will remain an international parliamentary organization, and it has rejected calls for its transformation into, or the separate creation of, a suprastate parliamentary body oriented more fundamentally to the global level. Johnsson states that IPU members first considered the idea of a UN parliamentary assembly in the early 1990s but rejected it as one "whose time had not yet come and for which there may not be a need," (2003, 21). He notes that later, as the IPU was consolidating its new relationship with the UN, and in 2000 held its first UN conference of parliamentary leaders, that the post-conference declaration did not mention a parliamentary assembly: "There is no reference to it, not because it was not discussed during the preparatory process but because it found no proponents amongst the participants" (2003, 24).

Numerous individual IPU members have since pledged support for the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, so it cannot be presumed that every member of every IPU delegation opposes the idea.[8] But let us consider a more fundamental question: whether the IPU, in essentially its present form but progressively more closely integrated into UN system governance, could perform the functions associated with a more formalized parliamentary dimension. These would involve promoting security and just outcomes for individuals globally, consistent with the protective instrumental approach, through performing representation, executive oversight, and gradually some legislative functions.

One concern that can be raised is the primarily national orientation of IPU parliamentarians. This is, for former Canadian Sen. Douglas (2003) and others (see Bummel 2008), a key reason to reject the IPU as the primary parliamentary organ at the global level or in the UN system. Unlike members of the European Parliament, Roche contends, IPU members will remain national rather than international in their focus and will not necessarily play the roles needed. Member states do indeed select single delegations of parliamentarians to send as a unit to IPU meetings, and they meet their counterparts as representatives of their national parliaments. Global issues for them are typically framed as ones of foreign policy or multilateral relations. By contrast, in the European Parliament, which again is in the category of suprastate parliamentary body, individual delegates seat themselves in the plenary chamber by political party rather than by member state, and voting since 1979 has become much more strongly correlated with party ideology than the national origin of members (Hix and Noury 2009). They must, of course, be attentive to concerns raised within their own sub-national electoral constituencies and often will give those personal priority, but the fundamentally suprastate nature of the body means that they also are pressed or mandated to consider broader interests of party, the Parliament and the EU overall.

More essentially, I will suggest, an international parliamentary organization will itself face severe structural challenges in filling the role of formal parliamentary dimension. The IPU is composed of sitting national parliamentarians joining annual delegations to its meetings or conferences. They are elected from parliamentary or legislative districts, and the overwhelming majority of their time is spent in serving the people of their district and especially in representing them at the national level. Plain time constraints will prevent them from playing an expansive and continuous role in a global oversight, or playing the full representation role. If we presume that, in the longer term, the formal global parliamentary dimension also should take on some powers of co-decision on important resolutions, etc., then it becomes that much less plausible that sitting national parliamentarians will be able to play the double role. This is an important point, in that it suggests that an international parliamentary organization simply would not be suitable as a candidate to play the 'full' parliamentary function at the global level. While, just as the IPU now does, it would be able to

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[8] Personal correspondence, Andreas Bummel, Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly, 2014.

provide valuable input from the perspective of some national lawmakers, at the global level it could serve only as a very limited consultative body, structurally prevented from exercising robust representation, oversight or accountability functions, and especially co-decision functions in the longer term. A significant gap would remain in each area.

4.2 An Independent Global Parliament

Here, instead of seeking to work within the existing UN system, some separate, independent body would be created. This category would include many past proposals for a federal world government (Clark and Sohn 1966), but the focus here is appropriately limited to more narrowly parliamentary schemes. One, offered by prominent UK columnist and author George Monbiot, exhorts global civil society activists, such as those who have gathered by the hundreds of thousands at annual World Social Forum events in various developing countries, to begin building a 'world parliament in exile' (2003a, 79; see Monbiot 2003b, Ch.7). He argues that such a freestanding body, when eventually formalized, would have "something no other global or international agency can claim: legitimacy. Directly elected, owned by the people of the world, our parliament would possess the moral authority which all other bodies lack. And this alone, if effectively deployed, is a source of power," (2003b, 94).

A separate scheme that has generated significant interest is from international law scholars Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss (2011), who see a Global Parliamentary Assembly (GPA) as a means of providing important oversight of global governance but also a deliberative and lobbying forum for global civil society. Like Monbiot, they suggest that such an assembly could be created independently by civil society groups, but they see as ultimately more promising the creation by states of a treaty-based assembly (2011, 95-97). They suggest that an initial treaty between as few as 20 democratic states could plant the seed for a broader democratic union over time, and eventually it could take a place inside the UN system alongside the General Assembly. One benefit of pursuing a treaty strategy in the near term, they say, is that it involves fewer democratic compromises, and "countries that are truly supportive of the GPA's democratic mission are likely to create the best, most democratic organization," (97).

While both schemes usefully direct attention to the roles global civil society groups could play in the development of a global assembly, seeking to develop it apart from the UN system could in fact raise more problems than it solves. Monbiot especially sees the separateness of his proposed assembly as an advantage: "The point of a people's assembly is that it is independent of pre-existing powers" (2003b, 98). Yet, that also will mean that the body is separate from the power nodes in the current system of global governance. Tellingly, he notes the United States submitting itself in 2002 to the scrutiny of other members of the UN Security Council as it made the case for a UN-sponsored invasion of Iraq. In Monbiot's understanding, this was a play for moral authority, or the legitimation of the proposed action in the eyes of the international community (2003b, 94-94). A global people's assembly could wield similar moral authority, he says.

Yet, it is doubtful that the stamp of approval from an independent people's assembly would bring with it the material support that typically comes with Security Council backing – a primary reason why even the most powerful states seek that backing. We can note that, when the case was made in 1990 for a US-led, UN-backed mission to expel an invading Iraq from Kuwait, the successful result brought not only the approval of the Security Council, but more than $39 billion in cash support and another $5.4 billion in in-kind support from other countries (US General Accounting Office, 1991). By contrast, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which did not receive Security Council authorization, is estimated to have cost the United States more than $2 trillion, with little of the cost being borne by other states (Trotta 2013). As former US Permanent Representative to the UN and Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright notes, "…when the US intervenes alone, we pay all of the costs and run all of the risks. When the UN acts, we pay a quarter of the costs and others provide the vast majority of the troops," (quoted in Fasulo 2004, 41-42).

This should not be viewed as decisive in itself, but it is indicative of the fact that the Security Council remains above all a center of globally unprecedented potential to authorize armed force in response to conflict. It can pass binding resolutions authorizing armed peace enforcement missions, can authorize sanctions against specific countries, and has assumed some oversight of the global arms trade. Despite the veto power wielded by its five permanent members, it has authorized around 70 peacekeeping missions since 1948 – with 56 of those coming since the easing of Cold War tensions in the late 1980s (United Nations Peacekeeping 2014). Of course, there remain crucial challenges around the effectiveness of specific missions, the gap between support pledged and delivered by member states, and many other issues. If, however, oversight of the exercise of power is to be one of the important roles played by a global parliamentary assembly, then it would be important to locate that oversight as close to the nodes of power and resource as possible. The same point could be made in regard to Falk and Strauss' proposal, though its legal sophistication and grounding in practical politics also deserve note. I return to their scheme below.

4.3 A UN Parliamentary Assembly

What, then, of the UN system overall as a site of global governance power and resource? The Security Council represents by far the most concentrated institutional power within that system, but it does remain focused on a relatively narrow range of issue areas related to its assigned mission of maintaining international peace and security (United Nations Security Council 2011; see Bosco 2009).[9] The system as a whole is notoriously far flung, creating in fact special challenges for promoting accountability and oversight. Its governance elements include a 'head of state' in the form of the Secretary General, who can advise and exhort state members and directs the preparation and administration of the UN's two-year budget of now more than $5 billion, but who does not have powers relating to binding resolutions. The General Assembly has some limited governance and oversight powers,[10] including budget approval, the admission of new members and the selection of the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council. Its role, however, is primarily advisory and, like the Secretary General's, exhortatory.[11]

The UN system also contains a 'bureaucracy' of more than a dozen specialized agencies and organizations, including the World Bank/IMF, World Health Organization, World Food Programme, International Labour Organization, though the Secretariat and General Assembly exercise in many cases only limited formal oversight of the agencies. And it includes the International Court of Justice, which can adjudicate disputes between member states that agree to submit to its jurisdiction, as well as since 2002 the International Criminal Court, which can under certain circumstances hear cases involving allegations of genocide or mass war crimes involving individuals within any of the 122 state signatories to its founding treaty. Further, institutions in some key areas of global

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[9] Some UN country delegates in recent years have criticized the Security Council for possibly overreaching its mandate in passing resolutions on broader issues. Statements have been issued from the President of the Security Council on security aspects of development, HIV/AIDS and climate change (UNSC 2010, 10-17). In such resolutions or statements, however, the Security Council is typically clear that other UN bodies should be seen as having the lead in those areas.

[10] Oversight efforts include the 1994 creation of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, charged with scrutiny of the organization's bureaucracy (see Fasulo 2004, 107-08).

[11] Many UN reform advocates have argued for granting binding resolution powers to the General Assembly, including former Assembly President Ali Treki of Libya in an address at the end of his term in September 2010 (UN News Centre 2010).

governance are only loosely connected to the UN system and would not automatically fall under a parliamentary assembly's oversight remit. The World Trade Organization is a prominent example, as is the G20, which has emerged as a summitry fixture for powerful states separate from the UN, and which has no permanent secretariat.

Despite these complexities, it remains the case that the United Nations has a unique *global* mandate to regulate interstate relations in crucial areas of security and justice. These include not only issues of war and peace, but core issues of development and humanitarian assistance, global health protection and promotion, and human rights protections. With this in mind, the following points can be made in favor of formalizing a global parliamentary dimension within the UN system, with emphasis on ways in which a UN parliamentary assembly could help to strengthen accountability, transparency and oversight within the system.

One potential oversight role is in providing broader-based scrutiny of UN actions and processes, especially in security areas. Former Canadian Sen. Roche notes, for example, the various post-mortem investigations of the failed 1994 intervention in Rwanda, where more than 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate majority Hutus were killed in a systematic campaign.

> The diversity of reports, and the diversity of reasons such reports were commissioned, militates for exactly the sort of democratic, transparent oversight role that a UNPA should provide. National inquiries, however worthy, serve national purposes. And differences in the UN, national and OAU [Organisation of African Unity] reports indicate that UN scrutiny should not rely on the UN Secretariat to investigate itself (Roche 2003, 37).

Such a security oversight role could be played not only after the fact, but on a continuous basis. A parliamentary body could have, for example, provided a platform for earlier and more intensive warnings about impending genocide in the 1994 Rwandan conflict, possibly reinforcing pressure for action. As noted by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was serving as US Permanent Representative to the United Nations at the time of the conflict, relatively early reports of mass killings were given by activists and UN officials on the scene, "But for whatever reason, the system did not manage to push the information up high enough to people making decisions" (Albright 2004). Albright notes that she lobbied vigorously internally for reinforcing rather than withdrawing peacekeeping forces in Rwanda in the early stages of the conflict, and that the Rwandan situation was not considered a high priority by US security officials.

Where diplomats and foreign service officers, as appointed representatives of their governments, are restricted in their public statements and must generally express their views up through a chain of command within the government, UN parliamentarians plausibly would have more freedom to bring conflicting views about security issues to the fore. Again, they still must answer to party whips and constituents, but they would not serve as directly appointed delegates of the government of the day – especially in the case of representatives from parties in opposition to that government domestically. A standing parliamentary body also could be expected to develop a committee system similar to those of national parliaments, mirroring bureaucratic agencies, engaging with them and performing oversight functions (see Beetham 2006, 128-31).[12] Such a system could create space for alternate and critical viewpoints on more longstanding security issues such as, for example, the global arms trade, where the five permanent Security Council members continue to rank as the top five arms exporters globally (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2014).[13]

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[12] Beetham, in a publication prepared for the Inter-Parliamentary Union, offers a range of useful insights on the oversight roles that are and can be played by national parliaments in relation to their executives and bureaucracy.

[13] The link also was highlighted by The Commission on Global Governance, which noted in its influential 1995 report on UN and global governance reform, *Our Global Neighborhood*, that the five permanent members were providing 86 percent of the arms exported to developing countries at that time (1995, 14-15).

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There also is potential for an important oversight role in relation to the UN human rights regime, and for the broader and more equitable inclusion of global civil society groups. For example, the UN Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has been criticized in recent years for excluding organizations focused on promoting individual rights. As noted by Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceable Assembly and of Association: "As of April 2014, out of the 48 organizations which have had their accreditations repeatedly deferred, 46 work on human rights issues, such as children and women's rights, minorities and country situations"(UN General Assembly 2014, 18).

Kiai also criticized the UN's 'no objection' procedure, which allows states to anonymously reject the participation at UN high-level events of NGOs without formal consultative status. He notes that no public justification is required, and that the procedure has been invoked by states in recent years to exclude civil society groups from UN New York high-level panel meetings on migration and development, the rule of law, and on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities (2014, 19-20).

In both situations, committees of a standing UN parliamentary body could have provided access to such groups and a platform for them to share their views, in much the same way as happens within the European Parliament. It cannot be claimed, of course, that states' executives would not also seek to suppress such views in an assembly, or perhaps simply to ignore them. Yet, a parliament again is not a diplomatic body but one fundamentally mandated to provide both broader and more specific representation for individuals, and to exercise oversight and promote accountability of the executive on their behalf. It could provide additional means of enabling individuals and groups to publicize, protect and promote their core interests and rights at the suprastate level. And, it would represent a standing, continuous pressure for improved access and accountability in governance processes.

As the assembly developed, it also could come to play a 'question time' role, where parliamentarians are able to directly question UN leadership and hold them to account for decisions. In terms of possible legislative roles, it would be impractical to think that a UN parliamentary assembly would produce binding directives or resolutions in the near term, or indeed be assigned formal oversight roles by the General Assembly or Security Council. We can turn, however, to an analysis from Erskine Childers and Brian Urquhart (1994), both former senior UN officials, of the oversight and input roles an assembly could play. For example, it could hold readings on major decisions before the specialized agencies of the Economic and Social Council, convey formal opinions to the Security Council, General Assembly and Secretary General on proposed resolutions or actions, and propose new policies or actions. Thus, even if the body did not exercise traditional oversight or legislative powers in the near future, it could seek in meaningful ways to exercise influence on decision making, and to put some important issues on the UN agenda that might otherwise be neglected.

The representation function of parliamentary bodies has been touched on, but we can note also the potential for a UN parliament in helping to promote a sense of stakeholder identity in the UN system and global governance more broadly for those within states. This sort of issue has been a longstanding concern in the European Union, where the Parliament has been viewed by many officials as a key to closing the EU democratic deficit noted above (see Marsh and Norris 1997). A number of lessons can be learned from the European experience about structuring a parliamentary system so that it ultimately can achieve representation aims, including ultimately in electoral systems (see Farrell and Scully 2007). It also provides a crucial suprastate laboratory for promoting citizen engagement with a parliament, and ensuring it is perceived as relevant.

We can note that a challenge for the European Parliament in recent years has been declining voter turnout, from the peak average of 62 percent in 1979 to about 43 percent in 2014. Some of the decline can be attributed to the accession of Central and Eastern European states without long

democratic traditions. Further, the turnout figure is in line with some registered in highly consolidated democracies. The 43 percent, for example, far exceeded the 36 percent turnout recorded in the US mid-term elections of 2014. Such commentators as Hix and Follesdal (2006) see the relevance question as closely bound the structure of the EU system. They argue that if those within states were able to elect the head of the European Commission, and if European parliamentarians could do more to shape the legislative agenda, that would help to address a continuing deficit and enhance perceived relevance.

The essential point here is that the creation of a parliamentary body would multiply the direct channels of representation for those within states, beyond the ruling-party or coalition executive delegations (see also Segall 1982; Heinrich 1992; Bummel 2010). In doing so, and by providing additional means for global civil society groups to give input and for key issues to be openly and transparently discussed, it holds the potential for bringing crucial aspects of global governance closer to the governed, and for increasing engagement overall with the UN system.

5. Further Possible Objections to a UN Parliamentary Body

The above already has touched on several practical objections that might be raised. Two other primary ones should be noted here.

5.1 Global Majority Will

Perhaps the most ready objection would be one related to representation and possible majority tyranny. As international relations scholar Joseph Nye argues, "treating the world as a single global constituency in which the majority ruled would mean that the more than 2 billion Chinese and Indians could usually get their way" (2001). While we can question any claim that Chinese and Indian constituencies will vote as a single bloc (see Koenig-Archibugi 2012),[14] the critique expresses common concerns around straightforward global majority rule grounded in strict numerical representation.

There is little reason to believe, however, that such a directly majoritarian form of decision making would be the norm in a UN assembly, especially in the near term. Existing domestic systems themselves tend to incorporate veto points or uneven representation that reflects past compromises among powerful groups. The US system, for example, offers representation according to population only in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, the state of Wyoming's 582,000 residents are apportioned precisely the same two senators as California's 38 million (see Dahl 2000). The UN system's structure, in particular the veto granted to the five permanent Security Council members, clearly is a result of such accommodation for powerful members (see Schlesinger 2003), and it is plausible to presume that even a solely consultative body would also reflect such dynamics in the near term.

Most proposals for a UN assembly, dating at least to Clark and Sohn's (1966) highly elaborated proposal for UN reform along world government lines, have presumed that some form of weighted voting would be necessary to launch the body. A more recent proposal from Joseph Schwartzberg offers a sophisticated formula equally weighting UN member states' population, economic contributions and sovereign equality (2012, 41). Under this formula, the United States and China

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[14] Koenig-Archibugi raises doubts about Nye's claim by examining the record of voting delegates from 185 member states, including China and India, to the International Labour Organization. The ILO has a tripartite structure, where voting delegates represent states as well as labour and business interests within them. He finds that the labor and business representatives do not vote by country blocs (see also Hix and Noury 2009).

each would receive 55 representatives in an assembly; India would have 39, Japan 20, Germany 15. Many other sorts of weighting proposals are offered in the literature. Ultimately, of course, such issues would be settled by negotiation among states, rather than the independent production of any formula, but the discussion gives some indication of principles that could partly guide such negotiation.

Further, it is possible that the prospect of weighted voting in such a chamber could be one factor in favor of its support by some powerful countries. The United States, among others, has a standing complaint that, while it contributes a great deal to the UN budget (22 percent in the US case), it does not exercise proportionate control of the regular budget in the one-state, one-vote General Assembly, where small countries are able to make use of their equal voting power (Fasulo 119-21). Some initial system of weighting by contribution and like factors could make the creation of a UN parliamentary assembly more appealing to such states.

5.2 Non-Democratic States

The mention of a country such as China also points toward objections around the inclusion of non-democratic states. Around 122 of 195 countries in the world are counted as electoral democracies (Freedom House 2014). That represents a dramatic rise from the 45 or so counted in the early 1970s, but still it means that only about 63 percent of states are democratic. Further, only around 90 are typically counted as liberal democracies, meaning they register relatively strong scores on the Freedom House index of political rights and civil liberties and are counted 'free.' Here we can recall Falk and Strauss's comment that a global assembly composed of states which already are strongly consolidated liberal democracies and supportive of a global democratic mission would likely be the most democratic itself, and the most easily launched in the near term.

Such a move to an 'alliance of the democracies' is understandable, and it follows many years of thoughtful consideration by both scholars. It runs a risk, however. The initial exclusion of non-democratic states also would mean excluding hundreds of millions of persons from the social goods that stand to be realized through broader participation and forms of representation within a UN assembly. The issues are complex, of course, but excluding non-democratic states from such an assembly could serve to compound injustices for the global 'persistent minority' of those living in non-democratic states (see Monbiot 2003b, 79). Such commentators as Archibugi (2008) argue persuasively that participation in a global assembly, rather than exclusion from it, could help to apply further global pressure for democratization within states, besides helping to nurture and ultimately consolidate participatory rule. This could be the case, for example, in states such as those involved in the 'Arab Spring,' which have struggled to stabilize, consolidate and guarantee political and civil rights after transition. In fact, this is one clear area where efforts by a dedicated UN assembly could complement those of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which has a strong democracy promotion mission.[15]

 At the same time, the risk could be very real that some hierarchical states would simply appoint delegates from the dominant party to a UN parliamentary assembly. Most advocates of a standing UN parliament assume that its members would initially be national parliamentarians appointed to serve, with appointments apportioned among major domestic political parties. In more hierarchical states, however, appointments could be exclusively controlled by the ruling party. This is a concern that has long been raised in the context of global parliament more generally, and the ultimate resolution likely will depend on continued movement toward democratic transition and the

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[15] The Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly's official position, adopted in 2008, is that the IPU could play a number of such complementary roles to a standing UNPA (Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly 2008).

consolidation of political and civil rights within various states. In the immediate term, however, we can again consider ways in which such an assembly could provide additional channels of access for non-party, civil society actors within these states, per the discussion above. Further, as Daniel Weinstock (2006) notes, in cases of severe political repression within states, those from excluded or banned opposition parties and civil society groups could be given voice by sympathetic 'trustee' representatives from other states, formally speaking on their behalf. The key consideration is whether, on balance, such additional avenues of representation and voice could contribute to movement toward more positive outcomes for justice and security in such states.

6. Possible Next Steps

If the discussion overall indicates that it would be appropriate to seek to fill the space of a formal global parliamentary dimension with a UN parliamentary assembly, what steps could be taken toward that end in the near term? (see Archibugi and Held 2011).[16] What are the likely challenges to be overcome? As has been emphasized here, the Inter-Parliamentary Union likely represents the most immediate challenge. It claims the space of a UN parliamentary dimension and has become integrated into numerous aspects of UN governance, but it would face severe structural limitations in actually playing the representation, oversight and ultimately co-decision roles of a UN parliamentary body.

The Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly (Bummel 2010[2005]) originally was open to the possibility of beginning with the IPU and seeking to develop a more encompassing assembly through it. More recently, given the reluctance of IPU leadership, among other reasons, Bummel (2008) has argued that an assembly should go around the IPU it rather than through it (see also Monbiot 2003b, 76-78). Bummel argues also, however, that the IPU could come to play a complementary role, representing the specific interests of national parliaments in the supranational parliament, analogous to the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (2008, 5; see Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly 2008).

The latter would seem a useful institutional structure for ensuring that the roles of both an international parliamentary organization and a suprastate parliamentary body are filled within the UN system. It was supported, in fact, by the European Parliament in its 2011 endorsement of a UNPA. Getting to such a structure, however, is not necessarily straightforward. The IPU has embedded itself into the UN parliamentary dimension, thus, it becomes the most appropriate starting point. Its leadership, along with those in the UN Secretariat and agencies who have embraced stronger IPU involvement, must then be persuaded or pressured to support the eventual creation of a standing parliamentary body.

One potentially fruitful interim step could be the creation of a global inter-parliamentary network for the United Nations. This would be a body similar to some noted above, in particular the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and International Monetary fund and the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. Unlike the Inter-Parliamentary Union, its members would be focused specifically on governance within the United Nations system, and they would seek to further develop the UN parliamentary dimension through promoting transparency, oversight and accountability within that system. This could be conceived initially as an informal network of national parliamentarians who are sympathetic to the idea of developing a formal UN parliamentary

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[16] The authors, while they do not focus strictly on a UN assembly, usefully detail a range of paths toward and agents possibly promoting the realization of democratic governance beyond the state.

assembly over time, and who would commit to working toward that end. It seems likely that the creation of such a network also would face resistance from IPU leadership, which again has claimed much of the UN parliamentary dimension for the organization. But the creation of even an informal UN parliamentary network could provide an important means of publicizing the case for a standing assembly and garnering further support for it, as well as highlighting ways in which it could operate as a fundamentally global-level complement to the more domestically oriented IPU.

In terms of support, we can also note an element of the global democracy story that is somewhat underrepresented in recent UN parliamentary arguments: global civil society. Unlike in the INFUSA efforts of the 1980s and 1990s, more recent efforts have not been focused primarily on enlisting the support of international NGOs and other civil society groups. To be sure, the Campaign for a UNPA has received an impressive number of endorsements – nearly 400 as of late 2014 -- from non-governmental organizations in more than 150 countries. Some of the largest development and human rights NGOs are noticeably absent, however, and there has not been the sort of concerted effort to focus global civil society pressure on UN reform that marked earlier efforts. Per Monbiot's analysis above, those activists who for many years have been joining together at the World Social Forum and myriad other venues, including at major UN conferences and hearings, could come to be a powerful force for pressure to create a global assembly – or to pressure the IPU into changing its stance toward the possibility, were it possible to bring them together under an umbrella UNPA effort.

This could only happen, however, were they themselves persuaded that the game is worth the candle. It is a commonplace among advocates of a UN assembly that the UN bodies themselves are distant and disconnected from the global public they serve, and that a UN assembly could help to close the gap. It may be, rather, that the gap must be partly closed before the creation of such an assembly is possible, and that major agents of global civil society must be cultivated as allies, at the same time that continued outreach is made to sympathetic parliamentarians in the IPU and other such networks, toward the end of softening IPU resistance to the idea.

Further, much work would remain to be done in expanding the appeal of a UN assembly elsewhere, in particular to audiences in countries such as the United States. The US is a crucial actor in virtually all areas of global governance, and as noted it continues to be assessed UN dues of 22 percent of the overall regular budget – more than twice as much as the 10.83 percent paid by Japan in second-place and three times third-place Germany's 7.14 percent in 2013-15. Yet, there has long been a significant vein of internationalist skepticism in US politics. The Campaign for a UNPA can count only six US member of Congress as formal supporters. That compares to 32 sitting national parliamentarians in France and 103 in the Campaign's home base of Germany.

Clearly much ground would remain to be gained among those more open to global engagement in the Congress and elsewhere. The United States, of course, continues to host UN headquarters in New York, which each autumn becomes something of a global capital city, as delegates from around the world, along with thousands of NGO representatives, seek to share their views and press their interests at the annual meeting of the General Assembly. The IMF/World Bank are headquartered in Washington D.C., and the country is home to myriad other agencies and organizations of international import. More closely integrating key US actors into UN assembly efforts would seem a high priority, and enlisting members of Congress in an informal UN parliamentary network could be an important first step.

Finally, organizations sympathetic to the UN assembly idea could engage in complementary efforts. For example, the Hague Institute for Global Justice, whose high-level Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance is co-chaired by former US Secretary of State Albright and former Nigerian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Gambari, could join forces with the Campaign for a UNPA to promote the idea among executive delegations and the UN Secretariat, as well as lawmakers. If such joint efforts

were themselves complemented by those of an umbrella coalition of key international NGOs, significant strides likely could be made toward formalizing a suprastate parliamentary body at the United Nations in the near term.

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