

Preface

The fourth issue of *Critical Currents* testifies to the Foundation's continuing engagement in issues directly related to the United Nations system; this is in line with its Mission Statement, which expresses its commitment to working in the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld's belief in and contribution to the United Nations and the values of multilateralism, along with his readiness to challenge the dominant powers and his defence of the right of small nations to shape their own destiny. As a world citizen and international civil servant, Dag Hammarskjöld considered it the noble task and purpose of the global governance body he represented to assert foremost the interests of smaller countries in relation to the major powers. He resisted with integrity and steadfastness the attempts to manipulate and instrumentalise his office and the organisation for the hegemonic purposes of the big powers dominating the international arena.¹

Almost 50 years later, the UN, and in particular the Security Council with its five permanent members (P-5) and their veto power, remain a reflection of the hierarchical structures that Hammarskjöld and

like-minded people had challenged. Despite major changes in the composition of the United Nations since then, the P-5 have not surrendered, but rather jealously guarded the control over the power to define, decide and execute. The ongoing debates on reforms of the UN and in particular its Security Council have so far not provided any visible formal and direct change of the guiding principles and the practices, although the issue remains contested and discussed. The latest proposals aiming for a fresh initiative leading to an enlargement of the Security Council were announced at the time of finalising this publication.² We have resisted the temptation to include any reaction to these latest suggestions in the texts that follow.

Instead, the contributions summarise from different perspectives the 'state of the art' and advocate alternatives. These differ according to the points of departure, but share the common denominator of being anti-hegemonic. In publishing the following analyses and views, our modest intention is to provide a framework for further debate, which is anchored in the firm belief that

¹ Additional recent testimony to this fact is offered in the most recent of the Foundation's series of Dag Hammarskjöld Lectures, published in parallel with this volume. The booklet reproduces the speeches delivered in October 2007 by Sverker Åström and Sture Linnér, two Swedish officials close to Hammarskjöld during the last years of his life. The publication is also accessible on the Foundation's website (www.dhf.uu.se).

² Drafted by Cyprus, Germany (which had taken the lead), Great Britain, Malaysia, Netherlands and Romania, in what was called the 'Overarching Process', the initiative suggests i.a. an expansion of the Security Council from 15 to 22 members (though this figure was put in brackets, i.e. it is still regarded as negotiable). It was submitted on 20 March 2008 to the General Assembly President.

the future of the United Nations depends on its democratisation and the higher degree of meaningful participatory influence of all member states, irrespective of their size or power, and thereby the body's ability to represent the interests of the majority of people in this world.

Many thanks go to all those who have contributed so willingly and competently, without any material interests or gains, to this issue of *Critical Currents*, thereby giving substance to the series' programmatic title. May the results of their efforts stimulate further a fruitful and constructive debate, which continues to honour the legacy and vision of the United Nations second Secretary-General, who until his untimely death sought relentlessly to enhance the democratisation of the world body he represented.

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