THE UNITED NATIONS: A CASE FOR REFORM

STANLEY NGUGI KAMANGU
REG NO: R51/68991/2011

SUPERVISOR: PROF.AMB.MARIA NZOMO

A research/thesis project submitted to the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Diplomacy of University of Nairobi

2013
ABSTRACT

In 1945, at the height of the Second World War, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. The aim was to establish a post war order that would secure the peace, advance global prosperity, alleviate poverty and unemployment, and promote human rights worldwide. These were lofty goals. The UN provides a unique platform for international action. It offers unparalleled legitimacy for global engagement, owing to its universal membership; its inclusive decision-making processes; its unequalled reach; and its ability to provide critical services that are essential to international peace, security, stability and prosperity.

However the world of today is not the world of 1945 and since the late 1990s there have been many calls for reform of the United Nations (UN) since an assessment of the UN’s performance returns a mixed record. It is only just beginning to implement effective global social and economic policies, and its development strategies are under attack from many quarters. It is widely regarded as bureaucratically unwieldy, unnecessarily expensive, and weakened by poor personnel recruitment. Both those who want the UN to play a greater role in world affairs and those who want its role confined to humanitarian work or otherwise reduced, use the term "UN reform" to refer to their ideas. The range of opinion extends from those who want to eliminate the UN entirely, to those who want to make it into a full-fledged world government. This study looked at the purpose of the UN, its structure and whether it has lived up to its mandate/agenda. The problem this study seeks to address stems from the fact that there is little clarity or consensus about what reform might mean in practice since the range of opinion extends from making it a world government or eliminating the UN in total. This study will therefore seek to identify and document the areas that need reform and the nature of reforms required. In chapter two the study anchors its arguments on the liberalism theory of international relations. Chapter three provides a case study of the Change Management Team (CMT) led by Atul Khare which was appointed by SG Ban Ki-moon tasked with guiding the implementation of a reform agenda at the UN that starts with the devising of a wide-ranging plan to streamline activities, increase accountability and ensure the organization is more effective and efficient in delivering its many mandates. Chapter four details new issues that emerged in the course of the study: for instance before the CMT was formed there have been other attempts at reform and some have sailed through but there are obstacles among them is finding common ground among the disparate definitions of reform held by various stakeholders. The global community has no common definition of U.N. reform and, as a result, there is often debate among some over the scope, appropriateness, and effectiveness of past and current reform initiatives. There also exists fundamental differences that exist between developed and developing countries which makes reform a herculean task as reform requires cooperation amongst all member states. Chapter five outlines key findings and recommends areas for further research and issues that should inform any change efforts. The study employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods facilitate new perspectives on things about which much is known or to gain also more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. It is expected that this study will contribute to the growing academic discourse on UN reform. The issue of reform in academic circles still requires clarity as to what aspects of the UN require reform and why this reform should be instituted in the first place. This study will therefore seek to enrich this academic area by examining the various aspects of UN reform.