

PART ONE

I General Observations

In some quarters, the UN has been criticized as an organization which is overly bureaucratic, too political, and ineffectual. Such criticisms are, perhaps, unfair and without justification in the broadest sense. There can be no doubt that the operation of the UN can be improved, but to base the value of the UN on how it operates is not to recognize its function in international society.

The UN plays both an active and passive role in intersocietal relations. In its active role, the UN has helped to limit or resolve conflicts between states. It provides safe refuge for those fleeing from all kinds of intolerance and injustice, assists in alleviating global hunger and disease, and continually works to raise the standard of education throughout the world. In these areas, the UN provides valued and needed services on behalf of the international community in the realm of relieving human suffering. The work of those agencies which act on the UN's behalf to facilitate these services, can be more easily measured than can the service which the UN provides in its passive role. Yet, the value of this role in international society is largely dependent on the willingness of state governments to cooperate with it, for the UN is a creature of their making.

In the UN's passive role, it serves the international community as a forum through which the community's state actors can deliberate on matters of international import; issues such as international peace and security, the arms race, or the norms, principles and/or rules that states employ in regulating their behaviour. In this regard, the UN functions as a tool for facilitating cooperation among state actors, promoting greater stability and understanding.

Toward these ends, the UN has achieved some success. For example, it provided a forum and organizational structure for the negotiation of a new set of regulations, which have helped to better order and stabilize international oceanic relations. In other areas, such as in the ACD field, the UN provides a variety of forums through which the international community can deliberate on questions associated with controlling the arms