Multilateralism: does it still matter?

Preparing for the ACUNS Annual Meeting
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 6-8 June, 2006

Inside: Michael G. Schechter and Matthew C. Zierler discuss the theory behind multilateralism in today’s global politics

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Multilateralism: does it still matter?

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The short answer is a clear and resounding, yes.

More interesting, however, is what scholars and practitioners are thinking when they ask that question, and why many would answer that question in the negative. Numerous, recent instances—mostly, but not exclusively, actions committed by the United States—suggest that both the spirit and activity of multilateralism is in decline and perhaps in crisis, what some have termed the second crisis in multilateralism. Such a perspective accurately highlights some of the challenges of multilateralism in practice, but by doing so frames the discussion of what multilateralism is, and how it matters, in a narrow way, focusing on a specific understanding of multilateralism and only a certain set of policy outcomes. We believe a more thoughtful and fruitful discussion of whether multilateralism matters in the 21st century will result from a brief review of the contending definitions of multilateralism and alternative evidence available as evidence of its impacts.

The United States’ decision to go to war in Iraq without express approval of the United Nations Security Council is the epitome, to many, of U.S. hegemony run amok. Added to President Bush’s actions upon taking office in 2003 such as refusing to join the Kyoto Protocol and “unsigned” the Rome Statute for International Criminal Court and withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, it is no wonder that many contend that the multilateral moment of the post-World War II era is dead and that unilateralism reigns. Similarly, the bribery scandals connected with the Oil for Peace program in Iraq and the seemingly never-ending uncovering of sexual abuses committed by UN and other peacekeepers have become the touchstones of those suggesting that multilateral institutions are incapable of effectively managing their own affairs. Such views reflect political realities, but they neglect the scope of the concept of multilateralism and the extent to which ideas regarding multilateralism and the existence of multilateral institutions have become pervasive elements of international relations. This is not to deny that the recent behavior of the United States, which clearly predates the current U.S. administration, potentially challenges or weakens the institutions of multilateralism, but rather such a focus overlooks the transformation of the international system multilateralism has brought about over the past sixty years and the extent to which multilateralism has become an embedded or taken-for-granted facet and assumption of the basic workings of global politics. This contention is based on our belief that it is best to recognize that the debate over whether multilateralism still matters is being engaged from a number of oftentimes, but not always overlapping perspectives.

One is a traditional, process-based view of multilateralism present in the work of those like Robert Keohane. Such a perspective views recent events as resulting from bargaining failures: the sides could not agree to policies that were supported by the group; thus individual states acted unilaterally or in smaller groups of like-minded states to achieve desired goals. Thus unilateralism is an expected outcome in the game of multilateral decision-making. This perspective would find the current situation to be troubling if states rejected bargaining out of hand and never seriously tried to work with others. A crisis would be one in which there was no mechanism for states to cooperate when they desired to do so. So only to the extent that recent U.S. behavior leads to the rejection of all forms of cooperation and thus influences other states to act similarly would multilateralism no longer matter.

A perspective of multilateralism similar to that in the work of John Ruggie would be more concerned with U.S. behavior and its potential future consequences. Ruggie’s view of multilateralism is similar to Robert Keohane’s in that there is a focus on the process of multilateral cooperation among states, but it has a broader social component that examines the shared principles, norms, and rules of conduct that form the underlying basis of cooperation. Thus the failure of the United States to not strictly follow the norms of the United Nations and international community in using force in Iraq and its reluctance to commit itself to institutions like the ICC that rely on reciprocity among its members proves troubling to the institution of multilateralism. But to doom multilateralism would be too drastic a conclusion, at least at this point, as U.S. behavior may have spurred other states to rally around basic norms of international society that were seemingly violated. If these core norms are stronger after this transgression, the United States could be more hesitant to act as it did in future situations.

An additional perspective on multilateralism that focuses less exclusively on formal interstate interaction is inspired by the works of Robert W. Cox and many assorted and divergent others who focus on a broader set of actors and issues in international relations than a purely state-centered world. Whether it is called bottom-up multilateralism, new multilateralism, or cosmopolitan multilateralism, the goal is to see the variety of cooperative behavior that occurs among, between, or across state boundaries and includes not only states and IGOs, but also NGOs, social movements, and individual citizens whose goal is to transform the international system in various domains. While these schools of thought would be also be concerned with U.S. hegemony and unilateralism, they...
would also point to the numerous areas where state dominance over the international agenda has been restricted, and to evolution of a global civil society, including counter-hegemonic movements. Whether it is increased attention to women’s rights or ecological dangers or U.S. and EU (seemingly always reluctant) compliance with World Trade Organization rulings against them, there are numerous examples of where multilateral activities have successfully changed the nature of world politics. Whether it is as norm creators, agenda-setters, or implementers, multilateral institutions have an important role in structuring how states and others think about what it appropriate behavior, and the prominence of these institutions provides a vehicle for social, political, and economic change that has not been felt on the global level before. It must be quickly added, however, that those adhering to such a perspective, sometimes deemed the “new realism”, recognize the power realities of the 21st century, that we still live in a highly stratified state-centric world where “top-down” or traditional multilateralism still matters much more than “bottom up” multilateralism.

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Sarah Husceko, Administration

ACUNS 2006 Annual Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Thursday, 8 June to Saturday, 10 June, 2006
“Does Multilateralism Still Matter?”
Book now for the ACUNS Nineteenth Annual Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Check our web site for upcoming details! www.acuns.org

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**Notes from the Executive Director**

**ON the HORIZON | 2006**

When January 2006 arrives, I will be half-way through the five-year cycle of my term as executive director. With this as context, I offer the following thoughts about past, present and future.

We have held an Annual Meeting in Western Europe (Geneva) and in North America (Ottawa), and I am very pleased that we have an opportunity in 2006 to bring the meeting to South America (Rio de Janeiro). The theme for the **2006 Annual Meeting** is “Does Multilateralism Still Matter?” The program for the AM06 is taking shape and updated details will be posted to the website (www.acuns.org and www.acuns.net) on a regular basis. In this newsletter you will see the Call for Papers and the Annual Meeting registration form for 2006. I hope ACUNS members also notice that the registration price for 2006 is close to what it was in 2002. I look forward to a great program.

Professor Monica Herz has taken the lead in encouraging the Council to look towards Brazil for the first time, and the Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro has agreed to host us. Holding the meeting in Brazil will encourage greater academic attention there upon UN and international organization studies. We hope, too, that it is a clear demonstration to current and potential future members around the world that the Council and the North American-based secretariat continue to take seriously the “international” as well as the “organization” side of the latter phrase.

The 2007 Annual Meeting, which will mark the 20th anniversary of ACUNS, will be held in New York City and we hope to bring as many of the original founders, plus former secretariat staffs and others, back together to celebrate the occasion. We still are looking for a site for AM 2008.

I hope that our membership feels we have made significant strides ahead with the new format and content of the newsletter, and with the public and members’ web sites. We have been very fortunate to work with the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), as they developed the ground-breaking IGLOO™ resource for scholars and practitioners working in international governance. The launch of the ACUNS web sites has taken six months of intensive effort, and the sites will continue to evolve to address our members’ needs and suggestions.

I believe with acuns.net that we are offering an important tool for democratizing - and vastly increasing - the potential for participation, dialogue and collaboration in research, teaching and practice.

It is intended that this should hold true for our membership, wherever you are located and whatever your level or stage of career development. If you cannot attend an Annual Meeting when it is held in North America, Western Europe, or South America; if you cannot access academic journals, news feeds, or publications through your university or other institution; if you are working without a local community of colleagues interested in the UN, international law, international organization; or if you are searching for a new network to explore ideas and to learn about another topic or approach, the web site can facilitate your interests.

We are welcoming submissions— including for the website on the theme of the 2006 Annual Meeting, which can be sent to the ACUNS Secretariat.

Another item of good news is that we have re-established, albeit in slimmer form, the ACUNS Dissertation Award for 2006-7 (and annually thereafter).

If any ACUNS member – individual or institutional – is interested in supporting this award, or in establishing additional awards for future scholars and practitioners, the secretariat would be pleased to hear from you.

The 2005 ACUNS-ASIL Summer Workshop on International Organization Studies was held successfully at the secretariat’s host institution, Wilfrid Laurier University, between 24 July – 6 August, on the subject of the Millennium Development Goals. Generous financial support for the 2005 workshop participants – 16 excellent young scholars and practitioners from almost that many different countries - was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), by the Office of the Vice President: Academic of...
The ACUNS Secretariat was very proud to be part of the official launch of IGLOO on Oct. 21, 2005, at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). IGLOO (International Governance Leadership Organizations Online) introduces an exciting new dimension of free, online collaboration for those working in international governance. (www.the-igloo.org).

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs recently applauded the IGLOO initiative, stating "today I learned about IGLOO...a new platform being designed that could be the perfect instrument for reaching a global community for action. This is a thrilling concept being developed at CIGI. Potentially, it’s exactly the kind of tool that can make a profound difference."

Sachs made the remarks at CIGI’05, a weekend of international discussions that took place Oct. 21-23, 2005, in Waterloo, Canada. (www.cigionline.org).

Some of the features in IGLOO’s state-of-the-art software include:

- a vast online research library, with material collected from 9,000 sources;
- a unique way of saving material collected from online searches;
- an ability to post ideas or research to gain public feedback;
- access to hundreds of news sources from around the world;
- an opportunity to announce research findings, events, and grant opportunities.

Alistair Edgar, the ACUNS Executive Director, accepted the “IGLOO Community Partner of the Year Award” on behalf of our staff's contributions to the website’s development. You can find a link to IGLOO through our website at www.acuns.org. If you have forgotten your password, please email Sarah Hucsko at shuckso@wlu.ca.
PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) and the American Society of International Law (ASIL) are pleased to support the sixteenth ACUNS-ASIL Summer Workshop on International Organization Studies. Contingent upon funding, the workshop will run from 25 July to 5 August 2006, at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

The workshop is intended to foster excellence in emerging scholars and practitioners who are at a relatively early stage in their careers. Therefore it is designed specifically for junior professors in international relations and international law faculties, post-doctoral and advanced doctoral level students, young lawyers and practitioners from civil society groups, policy staff from international organizations, human rights and development advocates, and others at similar early stages of their professional careers.

The purposes of the workshop are, first, to encourage new directions and new ideas in the analysis of international organization(s) and related legal studies; second, to establish and strengthen contacts between international relations and legal scholars and the United Nations practitioners; and third, to stimulate advanced research and teaching in the specific workshop subject matter.

The academic program of the workshop will be led by the co-directors, who have specific expertise as academics and/or practitioners in the fields of international politics and international law. Each workshop participant selected will be assigned to one co-director, and will develop their research project with her/his guidance.

PROGRAM THEMES

As expressed in the Draft Outcome Document, the September 2005 UN summit of world leaders was intended to reach an agreement that would “enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the UN system.” Facing crises over Iraq – the US-led invasion, as well as the Oil-for-Food scandal – and a wide range of criticisms from friends and supporters as well as ardent opponents of the invasion, as well as the Oil-for-Food scandal – and a wide range of criticisms from friends and supporters as well as ardent opponents of the organization, and set against the background of the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had made his own case for sweeping UN reform in his 2005 report, In Larger Freedom. The September summit became for many observers, the first real opportunity to review progress, and on which there remained stalemate or failure – and why? How do these successes, failures or stalemates affect the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the UN and the UN system? What specific measures have been taken to implement or to follow-up on reform measures, and what has been learned (or not), subsequent to the summit?

Workshop participants will be encouraged to examine political, legal, organizational and institutional, economic, social and other relevant dimensions or approaches to these issues. The United Nations and the wider UN system of multilateral institutions can be considered. Research papers can attempt to offer forward-looking ideas on how successes can be enhanced, or failures and deficits constructively managed.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Workshop participants will be selected by an ACUNS/ASIL review committee. Those selected will be expected to submit a ten-page draft of a research or policy paper to their assigned co-director in advance of the workshop. The paper must be original work prepared for the workshop, not material that the participant has undertaken for other projects or presentations.

The co-directors will make suggestions about additional readings, data or arguments in order for the participants to bring a more polished version of their paper to the workshop, to be distributed in advance of their presentations. Participants are responsible for providing copies of the paper. Participants also will submit to the ACUNS Secretariat in advance of the workshop, a 2-page abstract of their paper, and will be required to make an oral presentation during the workshop. The working language of the workshop is English.

It is hoped that the workshop will provide valuable guidance in the final development of a dissertation, publication or policy piece. The selected participants will receive lowest-cost economy class return air travel between his/her location and the workshop site; accommodation and some meals for the duration of the workshop; and access to university athletic, computing and library facilities where available.

The workshop is designed to promote collegial exchange and networking in an intense program. Participants are expected to take part fully in all aspects of the program. For this reason, participants are requested not to be accompanied by spouses, children or other dependents. A participant must obtain prior approval from ACUNS for family members to accompany her/him; however ACUNS cannot provide any additional travel, lodging or board for persons other than participants. Approval will be given only for extraordinary circumstances at the complete discretion of ACUNS.
International relations and legal scholars and practitioners from institutions in all countries are encouraged to apply. UN staff should apply through the internal application process (contact Margot Pieters at pieters@un.org). Applicants must submit a completed application form, four copies of a brief (3 to 4 pages, typewritten) research proposal and a full CV. Independent evaluation is critical for the selection committee; applicants therefore should arrange to have two letters of reference sent directly to the address listed below.

Completed applications must be received no later than Monday, 3 April 2006. Participants will be selected on a competitive basis. Application forms are available on the ACUNS website, or from:

ACUNS/ASIL Summer Workshop, ACUNS, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3C5, Canada.
Tel: (519) 884.0710 ext. 2766; Website: www.acuns.org
E-mail: acuns@wlu.ca.

Please return application form with your completed dossier.
Due: Monday, 3 April, 2006 to:

ACUNS/ASIL Summer Workshop
ACUNS - Wilfrid Laurier University | 75 University Ave. W., | Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5 Canada
Tel: 519.884.0710, ext. 2766 | Fax: 519.884.5097
“Does Multilateralism Still Matter?”

The Academic Council on the United Nations System is now accepting paper proposals from ACUNS members for workshop panel presentations at its Nineteenth Annual Meeting, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 8-10 June 2006.

The conference format for 2006 will include a new roundtable event plus plenary sessions of experts and smaller panel workshop discussions.

A more specific agenda will be available closer to the event. The roundtable format is intended to allow the maximum exchange of ideas and interaction, combined with the plenary sessions and panel discussions that have proven successful in past Annual Meetings. It is anticipated that this structure also will provide the best opportunity for participants to secure funds from their home institutions for travel to this meeting.

In a period of great challenge there also exists great opportunities for positive change.

The 2006 Annual Meeting will consider the fundamental question “Does Multilateralism Still Matter?” It is anticipated that this question will inform ACUNS members’ work as we examine a wide range of important issues that have arisen or that have gained prominence over the past half a decade, including but not limited to, dealing with terrorism and enforcing nonproliferation of WMD, promoting economic and social development and respect for human rights, the spread of democratic institutions and practices, supporting post-conflict peace building efforts in fragile or disrupted states, and the continuing need for reform of (and within) the United Nations and the UN system following the September 2005 world summit.

On these and related topics, the ACUNS Secretariat will be pleased to receive proposals from ACUNS members and others for workshop papers and panels. Individual and group submissions are welcome.

ACUNS members and others interested in participating in one of the workshop panels scheduled during the conference must submit an abstract (no more than 150 words), a proposal of their presentation linked to the above theme (500 words), and a short (one or two paragraphs) biographical note to the ACUNS Secretariat. Proposals for full workshops should provide details for each of the suggested participants. Submissions must be received by Friday, 21 April 2006. Submission via e-mail attachments is preferred.

The selection of presenters and workshop assignments will be made by a program committee, and applicants will be notified as soon as possible. ACUNS will attempt to accommodate as many presentations as possible, given time and space constraints.

ACUNS cannot offer financial support for travel or accommodations for those selected to take part in workshop panels. Participants therefore will be responsible for their own travel, board and lodging arrangements and costs.

Please submit proposals to:
ACUNS/Wilfrid Laurier University, Attn: 2006 Annual Meeting
75 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5, CANADA

Fax: 519.884.5097 | Email: acuns@wlu.ca | Website: www.acuns.org
# ACUNS 19th Annual Meeting Registration Form

**Does Multilateralism Still Matter?**

*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Deadline for submission: 3 April, 2006  
8 - 10 June 2006*

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**Name**


**Address**


**Tel:**


**Fax:**


**E-mail:**


**Affiliation**


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## Registration Fees

(fees do not include lodging - all fees are in US dollars)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>ACUNS Members</th>
<th>Non-members</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Full Program</strong></td>
<td>$195</td>
<td>$225</td>
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<td><strong>Economy Program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Student Program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Guest Program</strong></td>
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## Method of Payment

- [ ] Check/Money Order *(made payable to WLU-ACUNS)*
- [ ] Credit Card: *(Circle One)*
  - Visa
  - Mastercard

Card Number: ___________________________ Expiration Date: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________

Total Payment: $ ___________________________ *(All fees are in USD; must be payable at Canadian Banks)*

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Return completed form to ACUNS - Attention: 2006 Annual Meeting

**Wilfrid Laurier University • 75 University Avenue West • Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5**

Fax: 519.884.5097 • Email: acuns@wlu.ca
Dr. Jean Krasno, ACUNS member, is undertaking a joint project with Yale University and City College of New York to organize and publish the papers of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The project was launched on November 11, 2005 at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The Centre for International Governance (CIGI) in Canada, also associated with ACUNS, will host the website for the papers on the IGLOO network.

The purpose of the project is to provide an organized historic record of selected official papers of Secretary-General Kofi Annan in order to make more accessible to scholars, students, and policy makers the breadth and depth of the work of the Secretary-General.

It is important for the future benefit of the United Nations and multilateral cooperation to have a greater understanding of how this Secretary-General has managed his leadership role within the constraints and opportunities of the office. The project goals also include making the papers available for others to use for scholarly research and seminar discussion purposes.

Managing peace efforts in today’s complex environment is a daunting task. The “good offices” of the Secretary-General can play a pivotal role in determining whether mediated or negotiated settlements to dispute can prevent violence or deter further escalation of a conflict. The organization of Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s papers can make it possible for scholars and policy makers around the world to examine carefully the process in which the role of this, at times controversial, peacemaker has evolved.

Unfortunately, if someone did not take on the task of organizing the papers of the Secretary-General, the papers would be packed in boxes and taken to the UN Archives where they would not be available for 20 years. It is anticipated that the project will take about three years. More information will be available as the project gets underway.

ACUNS | 2006 Summer Workshop and Dissertation Award


The sixteenth ACUNS-ASIL Summer Workshop will be held on 25 July - 5 August 2006, on the topic “UN system reform after the summit: progress and limitations”. The Workshop is held in cooperation with the American Society of International Law (ASIL), and will take place at Wilfrid Laurier University.

ACUNS also announces the competition for its 2006 Dissertation Award, valued at US $1,000. The Award recognizes excellence and innovation in scholarship on a UN or broader international organization theme and topic. Full application details regarding the Workshop and the Dissertation Award are available on the ACUNS website and from the ACUNS Secretariat address.

UNU International Courses (UNU-IC)

United Nations University will organize the sixth regular session of its six-week UNU International Courses (UNU-IC) at UNU Centre in Tokyo, Japan, from 15 May through 23 June 2006. The UNU-IC programme is designed for postgraduate students and younger professionals (with a college or university degree) in various occupations in Japan and abroad who wish to pursue careers in international fields in public-service or private organizations. The courses provide analyses of global issues from both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

The four courses to be offered in May and June 2006 are:

I. United Nations System: Structural, Institutional and Normative Challenges;

II. Environmental Change: Managing Risks;

III. Human Rights: Concepts and Issues; and

IV. International Cooperation and Development.

Participants can choose to take one or two courses at a time. The tuition fee per course is ¥100,000 — about US$950 at the current UN exchange rate — or ¥150,000 (about US$1,450) for two courses. Participants from developing countries who take two courses and who can demonstrate a need for financial assistance are invited to apply for a limited number of UNU fellowships.

If you wish to apply for the courses please visit our website at http://www.unu.edu/ic/ for a copy of the brochure and UNU-IC Application Form. For further questions, please contact:

Ms. Wilma James, Training Assistant, United Nations University Centre, 5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan.
Tel: +81-3/3499-2811.
Fax: +81-3/3499-2828.
Email: james@hq.unu.edu

Deadline for applications is 16 January 2006.

Due to the high volume of applications we receive for the courses, UNU is unfortunately not in a position to acknowledge receipt of your application. We will only contact short-listed candidates.
Friends of ACUNS offers a $1000 award for best recent publication

The Friends of ACUNS, an endowment fund established to support ACUNS and its activities, is announcing that for the first time, it will offer a $1000 award for the best recent publication on the UN. The award will go to the author(s) of the best book or other publication that focuses on some aspect of the United Nations and/or the United Nations System. Books or articles published in the last 3 years, since January 2003, are eligible. Authors need not be members of ACUNS. You may nominate your own publication or that of someone else. The award will be given at the ACUNS 2006 Annual Meeting in honor of founding members of ACUNS, Victor Urquidi (Mexico), who passed away last year after giving many years of dedication to ACUNS.

A copy of the publication must be received by April 1, 2006. (If you can send 3 copies, that would be much appreciated, but not required.) An impartial committee will be established to review the publications and make the decisions. The award will be given at the ACUNS 2006 Annual Meeting in honor of founding members of ACUNS, Victor Urquidi (Mexico), who passed away last year after giving many years of dedication to ACUNS.

We are very pleased about this new award which we hope will highlight outstanding research and writing on the United Nations. We encourage ACUNS members and nonmembers alike to nominate outstanding works. We hope to make this an annual event at ACUNS meetings. If you have any questions, please contact Jean Krasno at jeankrasno@yale.edu.
ACUNS Welcomes its Newest Members

New Institutional Members

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