Chapter 3
Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

Varieties of IGOs

IGOs are a special category of international organizations. In the previous chapter we considered a number of non-governmental international organizations (NGOs), some of which have had a major impact on international relations. IGOs are always founded by governments which recognize that it is in their national interests to obtain multilateral agreements and pursue actions to deal with threats, challenges, or problems that cannot be dealt with effectively at the unilateral level. This kind of international cooperation between states is not a new idea. The Concert of Powers established in Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars was a striking illustration of the major European powers collaborating on a long-term basis in order to try to preserve international order and the security interests of the states that belonged to the system. It may have lacked the grandiose constitutional frameworks of the League of Nations and the United Nations but it did help the major powers to sustain a relatively stable balance of power in Europe and to prevent a major European war for over half a century. The key to this success was that it reflected rather than defied the reality of the balance of power in Europe at that time. As we will observe later, this was in contrast with the League of Nations, which failed to reflect the balance of power from its inception to its early demise.

There are two key dimensions which are valuable in any comparative analysis of IGOs. The first is the *scope* of the IGO, by which I mean the number of issue areas it can influence in international relations. The second is the *domain* of the IGO, meaning the number of states and significant non-state organizations over which it is able to exert influence. The United Nations is the extreme example: it has scope over an almost limitless range of issue areas and potential issue areas, and its domain includes almost every state in the world today. However, the sheer range of the scope and its near comprehensive domain have meant that it has always been seriously constrained in what it can actually achieve, not least because it is composed of independent sovereign states, including the most powerful states in the world, far beyond the capacity of the UN to dominate or control, and because it is dependent on the concerted support and the economic and military resources of its key member states (the US and the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council – Russia, China, the UK, and France) in order to implement its policies.

In complete contrast there are numerous functional IGOs established to deal with narrowly defined special functions. This type of IGO is sometimes assumed to be an ultra-modern development, but in fact some were established in the 19th century. Probably the first of these specialized functional IGOs was the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine set up in 1815. A more recent (20th-century) example is the International Police Organization, better known by its acronym, INTERPOL, an association of over 100 national police forces devoted to fighting international crime.

One category of IGO which expanded very rapidly in the 20th century is the regional IGO, including the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). These IGOs were formed to strengthen cooperation by states at regional level. Not all these

regional organizations are committed to developing full-scale regional integration or even partial integration. The European Union is the only IGO which has managed to achieve a relatively high level of economic integration. Most of its member states are now committed to using the euro, a common currency designed for all EU states. By contrast the OAS and ASEAN have not advanced very far beyond improved intergovernmental economic discussions and cooperation on issues on which they agree. An important variety of IGO is the special interest organization which has a very specific issue area and a domain which crosses all regional boundaries. A good example is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Last but not least there are IGOs which have been established with the objective of promoting regional security. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the best known of these but there are also the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Australia, New Zealand and US Security Treaty group (ANZUS), and other security groupings elsewhere in the world. NATO is far and away the most powerful and integrated of these regional military security organizations. The fact that its leading member state is the sole remaining superpower is the reason why it is so militarily powerful. NATO's *raison d'être* when it was founded in 1949 was to provide a strong defensive alliance to protect the whole North Atlantic area, including all Western Europe, against possible military expansion by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact satellite allies. One might have thought that NATO would disappear with the ending of the cold war, but far from fading away, the Alliance has actually increased its membership by admitting East European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic which were able to liberate themselves from communist rule at the end of the cold war. NATO, OSCE, and the other regional defence organizations are legitimate IGOs under the UN Charter. However, many critics of the recent expansion of NATO argue NATO's move into Eastern Europe, formerly part of the Soviet sphere of influence, has been

a key factor in motivating President Putin to pursue a major rearmament programme and to deploy anti-ballistic missiles. This is once again an illustration of the 'security dilemma' at work, slowing down or halting major disarmament efforts and refuelling arms races. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this controversy, it is abundantly clear that, as a result of the US role as the dominant power in the Alliance and the organization's long experience of operating a properly integrated command structure, it is by far the most powerful alliance in the world today. The differences between the US and key NATO European allies, France and Germany, over the invasion of Iraq undoubtedly created tensions within the Alliance but did not undermine its effectiveness. NATO is now providing a valuable contribution in Afghanistan where President Karzai and his democratic government confront a difficult security situation with the Taliban in collaboration with some local warlords attempting to regain control in parts of the east and south-east of the country. European members of the Alliance undoubtedly recognize the organisation's great value as a guarantor of their future security, but some politicians and senior military figures do express concern that the US may at some stage grow weary of its NATO commitments and withdraw into a 'fortress America' posture. There has been a current of US neo-isolationism in the not so distant past, for example, in the 1930s, and any repetition of this withdrawal from the task of preserving international security would certainly have serious consequences. Most NATO European allies are entirely dependent on the Alliance for their nuclear deterrent shield. *All* European NATO allies are dependent on the US for the airlift and sealift capabilities essential for any significant overseas operations. It should be recalled that NATO would have been severely limited in its capacity to act in the Balkans crisis concerning Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s had it not been for the Clinton administration's belated but crucial decision to help to find a lasting solution to the ethnic cleansing and other brutal violations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. 'Why couldn't the European Union have acted?' asked the newly appointed Foreign

Secretary. The Permanent Under-Secretary smiles indulgently at his new boss before replying, like a schoolmaster trying to deal with a pupil who is well intentioned but rather slow on the uptake.

> The EU is not what one might describe as a security organization. The only kind of security the EU parliamentarians and European Commission civil servants are really interested in is social security. They keep on talking about a European Army, and a common Europe and Security Policy, but the EU has no special knowledge in the defence field. It has no experience of deploying forces effectively as a regional IGO. It is a quintessentially *civilian* organization and its member states have always been able to sit back and allow NATO and the US ally to take care of any military security issues. I would respectfully suggest, Foreign Secretary, that you maintain closest possible links with NATO and, above all, keep the US government fully committed to its leadership role in the Alliance. Not that I mean we should downgrade our attention to EU matters – it is just a question of horses for courses. NATO for our long-term security, the EU for a remarkably attractive market for goods and services even if one has to admit that since the latest EU enlargement it is too cumbersome to make sensible decisions at a sensible speed.

At this point in the briefing the Permanent Under-Secretary might think it better not to launch into a detailed account of the byzantine complexities of the EU's institutions and processes and how some of its member states were seriously convinced that they could resurrect the European Constitution that had already been decisively rejected by French and Dutch voters in summer 2005. He could see the new Foreign Secretary's eyes glazing over. There would be another time to reveal the mysteries of the EU to his new boss.

In the mean time the more urgent task was to brief him about the only world IGO we have got, the United Nations, its weaknesses

and its hidden strengths – so well hidden in fact that many of the new Foreign Secretary's opposite numbers were going to send deputies to represent them at the next UN conference in New York. However, before tackling the UN aspect of the Foreign Secretary's job it might be helpful to review the brief, brave but (as the Permanent Under-Secretary might see it) naïve and totally misguided experiment of the League of Nations, the precursor of the UN and putative world institution for preventing any repetition of the horrific tragedy of the First World War. The story of the League is an essential lesson in the dangers of misguided idealism in international relations to which all foreign ministers and heads of government should be exposed.

The League of Nations

The First World War (1914–18) was a colossal tragedy for humanity. Not only did it cause millions of deaths and terrible injuries among participants on all sides: it also set in train the events which appeared ineluctably to lead to the even greater tragedy of the rise of Nazism and the Second World War.

The First World War was a tragedy in the true sense: it could have been avoided if the quality of leadership of the major powers had been adequate to the task of proper diplomatic communication and negotiation. It was like a gigantic railway accident in which the drivers were blindly rushing ahead without thought for the possible consequences of the collision. This metaphor is not inappropriate because the means by which Germany and the other major belligerents set in motion their mobilization of troops for war was the railways. The historian, A. J. P. Taylor made an important point in his book *The First World War* when he wrote: 'The First World War had begun – imposed on the statesmen of Europe by railway timetables. It was an unexpected climax to the railway age.'

It is literally true that by the time the wiser heads tried to intervene to warn of the dangers of war and to stop the mobilizations it was too late: the trains were moving out of the stations across Europe. There was so little understanding of the likely consequences of a full-scale European war that flag-waving crowds went to cheer the troops as they departed, and the public believed the war would be over by Christmas. They did not foresee the nightmarish horrors of trench warfare and mass bombardments that wiped out millions of young lives. One only has to visit the war memorials in the villages, towns, and churches of the United Kingdom, France, and other belligerents to realize that a whole generation was decimated by the war. Small wonder that the popular slogans at the end of the conflict were that it was 'the War to end Wars' and it was 'making the world safe for democracy'.

President Woodrow Wilson, the US leader who had reluctantly taken America into the war, was desperately keen to ensure that in the post-war peace settlement a new world organization would be established which would be able to ensure perpetual peace. He was the statesman most committed to the idea of a League of Nations when the victorious powers met at Versailles to decide the terms of peace. It was Wilson's energy and commitment to the idea of a League, an idea which had been discussed and proposed by many idealistic people, including Jan Smuts of South Africa, Leonard Woolf, and many liberal intellectuals, which forced it onto the Versailles agenda, despite the fact that Clemenceau was deeply sceptical and Lloyd George was only lukewarm about the idea.

The League was undoubtedly the most daring and innovative proposal to reshape international relations to have been put forward in the early 20th century. The League Covenant and the major organs of the new organization were aimed at establishing procedures for the peaceful resolution of international conflicts and disputes. The League was to have three main organs:

a Council of 15 member states, including the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union as permanent members, which would meet three times a year; an Assembly in which all member states would be represented and which would meet annually; and a permanent Secretariat. A key principle of the League was that all decisions had to be by unanimous vote. Needless to say this made it very difficult, indeed well nigh impossible, for the League to act swiftly and effectively in times of international crisis. It was an underlying assumption that the League would intervene in international conflicts. Parties to disputes were supposed to put their complaints before the League or to international arbitrators, but if the League or arbitration could not reach a decision the parties to the dispute could go to war after a further pause of three months. The Permanent Court of International Justice could also become involved.

In theory the key article of the League Covenant was supposed to be No. 16 which enabled the League to invoke economic or military sanctions against a defiant state. In practice every member state could decide whether they wished to participate in economic or military sanctions.

This convoluted procedure and weak constitution partly explains why the League proved to be so useless in the face of Italian, German, and Japanese aggression in the 1930s. But the major reason for the abject failure of the League to uphold international peace and security was that it did not reflect the realities of the balance of power in the inter-war period.

Paradoxically the United States Congress refused to agree to America joining the League despite the fact that President Woodrow Wilson was the major champion of the idea at Versailles. The absence of the US was of huge significance because it deprived the League of America's military and economic power. Germany, Japan, and Italy, under their dictatorships, rejected the authority of the League. One of Hitler's most popular rallying

cries during the Nazis' rise to power was his denunciation of the 'diktat' of the Versailles Treaty. When the League failed again to stop Italian aggression in Abyssinia, Japanese aggression in Manchuria, Hitler's seizure of the Ruhr, Hitler's Anschluss with Austria, and Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia, it was clear that it was a broken reed.

Despite its failure to maintain peace and security, however, the League did at least provide evidence of a desire to establish an international institution capable of maintaining peace. In this sense it paved the way for the UN, and readers will note in the next section that the framers of the UN Charter borrowed some elements of League structure in designing the new world IGO. Fortunately, as we shall see in the next section, the founders of the UN had much greater realism than the providers of the League. Hence, despite its obvious weaknesses, the UN has shown much greater durability than its predecessor and has always been able to exert more influence, not primarily in the peace and security task but in the whole range of specialist agencies which have done remarkable work in assisting in the economic development of less developed countries, promoting world health, providing emergency care for refugees, and so on. These achievements are not minor: they constitute a major contribution to international relations. Nevertheless, on peace and security issues the UN stands to be judged almost as harshly as the League. Let us consider why this should be so. Did we not learn lessons from the League?

The United Nations

Although the political leaders of the Allies in the Second World War recognized the need for a new world organization to replace the failed League of Nations and the UN Charter does constitute a considerable advance on the League Covenant in many respects, the UN labours under similar grave disadvantages when it attempts to carry out its major task of ensuring world peace

and security. As was the League, the UN is founded on the twin principles of the sovereignty of states and an essentially voluntary system of collective security, meaning that the organization has no means of enforcing its decisions and it is up to the member states themselves to decide what their obligations to the UN should be and whether they should honour them. These fundamental weaknesses are simply an inescapable consequence of the quasi-anarchic nature of international relations. There is no world sovereign body because states believe that the creation of a world government with the power and the authority to make and enforce world laws would sometimes work against their national interests.

Thus, while it is true that the UN Charter gives the world organization stronger powers than the League had under the Covenant, it has failed time and again when confronting major threats to peace and security. However, when I say the UN has failed I am really criticizing the member states, for it is *they* who decide (or fail to decide) what, if anything, the UN should do.

It is therefore a mistake to judge the UN as an autonomous actor in the international system: it is in essence an intergovernmental forum constantly constrained by basic inter-state disagreements and disputes both in the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The UN Charter is the world organization's basic constitution and a major source of international law. It defines the aims of the UN very broadly indeed: maintaining international peace and security by means of peaceful settlement of disputes and collective security; the promotion of international cooperation in the economic and social fields; and the promotion of respect for universal human rights. It is important to bear in mind that the Charter confers duties as well as rights on member states.

The vagueness of the Charter's language and underlying principles has turned out to be one of the UN's hidden strengths, providing

it with far more flexibility and potential durability than the Covenant could ever provide for the League. For example, as F. H. Hinsley (1963), E. Luard (1979), and others, have pointed out, the decision to give each permanent member of the Security Council the power of veto gravely restricted its scope to influence events during the cold war. On the other hand, this provision in the UN Charter made it less likely that the major powers would withdraw from the organization, possibly leading to its ultimate fragmentation and demise.

The multilateral treaty that we know as the UN Charter emerged from the discussions at the Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco Conferences at the end of the Second World War. It created six major UN institutions: the Security Council, containing major powers as permanent members and key executive decision-making powers to deal with crises such as threats to international and security; the General Assembly, an annual forum of all the member states' representatives which has responsibility for supervising all the other agencies which are part of the UN family (e.g. the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UN Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General; the Economic and Social Council, the forum for all the specialized functional agencies dealing with welfare and economic and social development issues; the International Court of Justice; and the Trusteeship Council which was set up to supervise non-self-governing territories designated by the UN as Trust Territories).

It is widely agreed among academic students of international relations and practitioners such as diplomats and legislators that the UN, due to factors beyond its control, has a very poor record in its attempts to maintain peace and security, and this situation has continued, despite the ending of the cold war. It has made a modest but useful contribution by deploying UN peace-keeping

forces under the UN Security Council's mandate to help establish and maintain ceasefire and truce agreements and to help back up the diplomacy of conflict resolution. Peace-keeping is not mentioned in the UN Charter, but it has been a useful form of improvisation by the UN and, in a number of cases, it has helped to terminate conflicts (in Cyprus, the former Yugoslavia, Congo, for example). For the first 45 years of the UN's existence the UN Security Council (UNSC), consisting of 15 members (including the five permanent members), was virtually paralysed by the cold war ideological divisions between the US, UK, and France, on the one hand, and the former Soviet Union, on the other. All permanent members have the power of veto, and this made it all too easy for the former Soviet Union to block any Security Council resolution to which they were opposed. Therefore, although in theory the Security Council was given far stronger executive powers than the old League Council, they were practically useless during the cold war period. The only time the UNSC was able to authorize military action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter was to dispatch troops to South Korea to resist the North Korean invasion, but this was due simply to the absence of the Soviet delegate, and was of doubtful legality.

Despite the many severe setbacks the UN has suffered in its attempts to carry out its tasks of maintaining peace and security, many observers would give the UN system very high marks for the work of its specialized agencies. Indeed those who favour a 'functionalist' approach to international relations would argue that it is precisely through this cooperation on non-political matters, such as economic development and capacity-building in less developed countries, that states begin to act and develop a genuinely international society capable of pursuing the common interests of humankind.

The Permanent Under-Secretary in his briefings to the new UK Foreign Secretary would be unlikely to subscribe to this idealistic functionalist view. He would be in favour of the UK encouraging

13. The UN Security Council in session: it was established under the UN Charter as the permanent body to maintain peace and security and consists of five permanent members (US, Russia, China, UK, and France) and ten non-permanent members.

and assisting in the excellent work of the specialized agencies, but he would point out that there is no evidence to date that cooperation of this kind makes cooperation on peace and security issues any easier.

UN reform?

As has just been observed, the effect of cold war hostility and suspicion on the work of the Security Council was crippling so far as its role in maintaining international peace and security was concerned. With the ending of the cold war a window of opportunity for UN reform appeared to have opened. The UN provided major support for the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invaders, and many observers hoped that a New International Order was being established, in which the UN had a vital and much more powerful role.

Sadly this opportunity was lost, and in the 1990s the world organization found itself hopelessly overstretched as a result of increasing efforts at humanitarian and peace-keeping responsibilities in a growing number of internal rather than inter-state conflicts, for example, in El Salvador, Haiti, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, and strife in the republics of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia.

The UN suffered severe setbacks in these conflicts: UN troops were taken hostage in Bosnia; the UN was compelled to withdraw from Somalia where the US troops had suffered casualties. In Rwanda, Burundi and other places, such as Darfur, where severe inter-communal wars are going on, the UN has often been stymied by lack of troops, shortage of funds, and disagreements among the UN Security Council members which have severely limited the UN's capability to intervene effectively. The work of the specialized agencies has continued to have truly remarkable results, despite the inadequate funding they receive for their crucial tasks.

Prime Minister Tony Blair is one political leader who has recently expressed his strong commitment to UN reform. It is clear that he sees no contradictions between this view and his belief that it was right to join with the United States in an invasion and occupation of Iraq, despite the failure of the US and the UK to gain explicit UN support for their military venture, and his confidence that the war was entirely justified and that the only 'mistakes' he and President Bush need to apologize for were errors in implementing the policy on Iraq.

In a speech at Georgetown University in 2006, Tony Blair argued for an enlargement of the UN Security Council, and appeared to sympathize with the demands of countries such as India, Brazil, Japan, and Germany for seats on the Security Council. He is also in favour of abolishing the veto powers of the permanent members of the Security Council. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly,

he has implied that the only way to overcome the unwillingness of other permanent member states to give up their veto powers would be for Britain to make the first step and give up its veto power.

But when one considers the likelihood of other permanent members, especially the US, Russia, and China, giving up their veto powers it seems more likely that the UK would simply be throwing aside its veto power in an empty gesture. Giving up the UK's veto power might, in some circumstances, constitute a grossly irresponsible step towards weakening the country's capacity to influence.

Tony Blair also proposed in his speech in Washington (on 26 May 2006) a strengthening of the role of the UN Secretary-General and a major reform of the UN's bureaucracy. None of these proposals for structural change in the UN is new. What was new in Tony Blair's speech was his proposal for enhancing the UN's capacity to take 'pre-emptive' action which has a distinctly neo-conservative ring. He said that the crisis in Darfur proved that the UN should be 'an empowered international actor', with the capacity to intervene militarily in undemocratic countries to spread democratic values around the world. One only has to consider the number of states that would feel threatened by the UN 'reformed' to conform to the Blair model to see why a reform of the UN on these grandiose lines appears highly unlikely. It is not only small and medium-sized states that would feel threatened by such changes. Large and important countries such as China and Russia would also be deeply opposed. A clear illustration of their very different concepts of the national interest is their opposition to international sanctions, especially military sanctions being used to force Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment programme. Beijing and Moscow have very different visions of a reformed 'world order' from those of Messrs Bush and Blair. The UN system has been able to endure so long because it has learnt to *manage* these often fundamental differences and

to act as a genuinely *neutral* world organization. A sure way of undermining the UN and ultimately killing it off would be to force a straitjacket of control by the sole global superpower and its close allies.

Efforts to impose a single set of values or a particular ideology, religion, or political system on the world have almost invariably had tragic consequences. Better to have a UN system which acts as an effective forum and as a system for global diplomatic communication than a more powerful UN obtained at the cost of turning the world organization into an authoritarian world government or quasi-imperial system. And in an age of weapons of mass destruction the UN should surely be devoted to the prevention of war not to its promotion.

European Union

'European Union' is in some ways a rather misleading label for the complex of institutions and processes which are all part of the efforts by some Europeans to achieve European and economic and political integration. The decisive rejection of the draft European Union constitution by the French on 29 May 2005, and by the Dutch on 1 June 2005, shocked the European politicians and officials who wanted to move towards ever closer integration. Any EU Treaty has to be ratified by all member states before it can be put into force. It is particularly worrying for supporters of closer European integration that the two countries where the public rejected the draft constitution were founding member states in the European Economic Community which was set up in 1957. Moreover, six other member states (Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Poland) announced that they had no intention of holding referenda on the draft.

In the light of the current profound crisis over the future of the European integration project it is important to remind ourselves of the very special circumstances which attracted many of

Europe's political elite and business and professional groups to support the idea from the outset. The European nation-states had been devastated and impoverished by two world wars in the space of 50 years. They feared that if they remained divided on national lines they would be weak and potentially vulnerable to Soviet communist expansion. They also believed that European recovery would be stronger and swifter if they could achieve progress towards greater European economic integration.
A second powerful political motivation for developing economic integration was the belief that if you could integrate certain key sectors of the economy across national borders you would be able to reduce the war potential of states. The creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 was a major catalyst in the integration process. (Europeans recalled Hitler's exploitation of the key coalmining and industrial region, the Ruhr, between the wars.)

The idea of a coal and steel community had been proposed by the Schuman Plan in 1950 and was formally established by the Treaty of Paris (1951). It was a huge success and convinced the founding members (France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) that they should take further steps towards European integration. Functionalists saw the success of integration of specific industrial sectors as confirmation of their belief that integration of non-political activities would ultimately facilitate political integration.

The functionalists' project of sectoral integration was greatly assisted by the success of ECSC. Further progress in this direction was seen in the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Community (EURATOM) by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Further support for the functionalist approach as the most effective route to wider integration seemed to be provided by the complete failure of schemes to establish a Political Community and a European

Defence Community. But the attainment of greater economic integration in a growing number of economic sectors has not inevitably led to political integration. It was the *economic* success of the European integration sectoral functionalist model which was confirmed by the European Coal and Steel Community. Economies of scale could be achieved and access to greater investment and enhanced competitiveness provided the real engine of both European economic growth and the integrationist efforts, with all the founder members prospering greatly from their access to a wider European market.

It was the attraction of gaining access to the European Community (EC) Market that eventually attracted the United Kingdom to join the EC along with Denmark and Ireland in 1973. Greece joined in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986. When the cold war ended it became possible for the states that had pursued a policy of strict neutrality in the cold war (Austria, Sweden, and Finland) to join, which they did in 1995. Once again, the primary motive in the case of every applicant country was *economic*.

The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the end of the cold war meant that there were no perceived military security benefits to be gained from the European Union. In any case, the security of the European Union democracies during the cold war was guaranteed by the NATO shield, incorporating the huge military resources of the United States for the collective security of the entire North Atlantic Treaty area.

It is a strange irony that, although the East European states accepted into the EU in the latest enlargement have joined primarily to gain the economic benefits of members – such as access to the largest single market in the world, the free movement of people, goods, and services across European borders, access to regional development grants, and so on – some awkward facts appear to be undermining hopes of an imminent European economic recovery.

Economic growth has been disappointingly sluggish. Unemployment is high in the member states and it appears to be difficult to bring these levels down. This applies just as much to the founding members as it does to some of the new ones. In France, Italy, and Germany, annual growth between 2001 and 2005 was only 0.9 per cent, compared to 2.6 per cent in the same period in Spain and Britain. Economic experts point to the urgent need for the EU to deregulate its labour markets and services. Above all, if the EU is to recover the economic success of its early years, it must work hard to prevent member states from using economic nationalism as an excuse for protection and for circumventing the tight EU competition rules. Determination to uphold the single market and to boost the freedom of movement of labour, goods, services, and capital is vital to the long-term health of the EU. The single market should provide the necessary foundation for the kind of economic recovery which would help to restore the EU's popularity and its confidence and sense of purpose.

However, to repeat an important lesson drawn from my overview of the UN, we should beware of placing all the blame for the EU's current woes and apparent loss of a sense of direction on the EU institutions. The EU is after all an IGO, though admittedly an unusual IGO in that it has carried regional economic integration efforts much further than any other regional organisation in the world. As an IGO the EU depends on its member states' governments and political leadership to make the organization's key decisions and to shape and implement its policies. The parliamentary democracies of Italy and Germany have experienced considerable political difficulties in the aftermath of very tight general elections and this has undoubtedly affected the ability of the new governments to act decisively and swiftly. The 'no' votes in the French and Dutch referenda on the EU constitution were almost certainly based on growing criticisms of the EU and on frustration and disillusion with their own governments in Paris and The Hague for their widely perceived

failures to tackle the problems of lack of growth and lack of jobs in their own countries.

Yet, although it is stretching it too far to describe the EU as a fully autonomous actor in international relations, its achievements as an IGO working for the benefit of Europe are frequently underestimated. One major benefit the EU has brought to Europe is the consolidation of stability and democracy within applicant countries. By insisting that all applicant member states must have fully operative democratic political systems upholding the rule of law, respect for human rights, a functioning market economy, and adherence to EU rules, before they can be admitted, the EU has been an enormous influence for good. The largely unforeseen consequence of the massive enlargement of the EU is probably the most important effect that this ambitious IGO has had on international relations – it has made Europe more democratic.

Talk of rejecting applicant countries even after they have met the conditions required by the EU seems highly irresponsible. The fears of some member states that the economic consequences of enlargement will do serious harm to the EU have turned out to be groundless. The European Commission investigated this issue recently and found that the admission of new member states from Central Europe in 2004 had increased economic growth and created employment not only in the new member countries but also for existing members. We also need to bear in mind the likely consequences of refusing to admit new member states which have satisfied all the admission criteria. A recent special report by *The Economist* warned:

> Analysts of the western Balkans agree that if Brussels were to slam the door, these countries could easily slip back into nationalism, drug and people-smuggling, organised crime and even war – with lots of undesirable consequences for Western Europe. Similarly, a Turkey spurned by Europe could soon regress into a sour and militant Islamist mood, right on Europe's front line.

To conclude this brief discussion of the role of the EU, I will focus on two key trends which, whether the founder member states like it or not, are likely to determine the future shape of the European integration project. First, there is the far-reaching effect of enlargement. The current EU has four times the membership of the original European Economic Community. There is no sign that the new East European members are committed to supranationalism, on the contrary, having suffered decades of suffocating oppression under Soviet satellite communist regimes, they have a strong determination to enjoy having their own independent national governments.

The supranationalist politicians in the European Parliament, the European Commission, and some of the EU government are likely to discover that a 25-member-strong EU cannot be forced into a supranational structure. The EU will remain a crucially important forum and structure for closer European regional cooperation, but it is unlikely to become the equivalent of a United States of Europe. If the EU attempts to try to resurrect the draft European constitution and make the French and the Dutch vote on it again it is likely that it will only intensify the public opposition to the integration project. Europeans still identify their nation-state as the primary focus of their loyalty. National governments and parliaments are the institutions that Europeans still regard as the centres of power which they need to influence over key policy decision of all kinds. The European Parliament has extremely limited powers in the EU structure, and most citizens of member states would have difficulty in naming their own Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

A fundamental problem facing the EU is the democratic deficit reflected in the huge gap between the members of the European integrationist elite and the average citizen in the member states. The public increasingly resent the fact that they have such limited power to influence EU decisions and policy making. The real centres of power in the EU are to be found in the Council

of Ministers appointed directly by the national governments and the European Commission, the EU's powerful bureaucracy which proposes and helps to decide central questions of policy in consultation with the Council of Ministers. It is true that the Commission also reports to and consults with the European Parliament, but although the Parliament is the only EU institution directly elected by EU citizens it has very limited legislative powers. Its most significant power is its right to approve or reject the EU budget. The EU is still an IGO with an elected consultative chamber, not a democratic superstate in embryo.

In view of the strong national loyalties of the leaders, legislators, and voters in the EU member states and their often conflicting perceptions of their national interest, is it no surprise that the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has been slow to develop and that European politicians have often expressed their frustration that the EU governments have been unable to agree on how to respond to major crises. For example, the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mark Eysken, impatient about the EU's lack of responsiveness during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, described Europe as 'an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm'. His comments show a fundamental failure to understand the nature of the EU project. The EU is not a truly autonomous actor in international affairs. Its external relations inevitably reflect the fact that its member states are not prepared to give up their sovereign control over their foreign policy. Moreover, as I have already observed, the EU states have never felt the need to make the organization into a powerful military alliance. They already have NATO to undertake that task. However, it is a serious mistake to dismiss the EU as a 'political dwarf': a label of this disparaging kind implies that the EU is a kind of sovereign state. In reality it is a potentially valuable mechanism for multilateral communication and cooperation on a daily basis. When the EU governments can agree on a common position on a major foreign-policy issue, as they did, for example, on how to respond to Iran's successful uranium enrichment, this provides EU

political leaders with considerable additional diplomatic leverage. It has not escaped the notice of other states that the EU is an economic giant. It is the biggest and richest single consumer market in the world and, partly as a result of the EU's huge enlargement, the EU's total GDP and population are far greater than those of the North American Free Trade Area. Of course it is also the case that the EU's ability to influence international relations will be crucially affected by the political will of the governments of the member states and by the powers of persuasion of the EU's political leadership and top officials. The qualities of *statesmanship* which make a great difference to the fate of states are just as essential to the work of an IGO if it is going to attain any real influence on international relations and events. Another factor which can have a major effect on the opportunities of the EU to exercise real influence is the pressure of events and shifts in the global balance of power. The EU has a special window of opportunity to exert diplomatic leverage for its member states with the US government increasingly confronted by the high costs and risks of unilateral policies. In the midst of President George W. Bush's second term, after years of war in Iraq and with the particularly thorny problem of Iran's nuclear programme to deal with, it was clear in mid-May 2006 that the US was prepared to wait to see the results of multilateral diplomatic efforts, led by Javier Solana, the EU's foreign-policy chief, to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. What the EU states acting in concert can bring to bear in such crises is what Professor Joseph S. Nye of Harvard University has termed 'soft power', the civilian sources of influence and peaceful persuasion such as economic strengths, diplomatic sophistication, and a reputation for fairness and objectivity. Above all, at a time when the policies and actions of the sole remaining superpower are provoking widespread anti-Americanism, it may be a huge advantage to have diplomatic initiatives which are clearly seen to be independent of those of the United States, even though they will need US willingness to accept the outcomes if they are going to work.

To sum up my conclusions on the roles of the United Nations and the European Union: (i) it would be a mistake to assume that these IGOs are truly autonomous actors in international relations; (ii) however, on behalf of their member states, they can at times exert considerable influence.

Some other regional IGOs

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in 1967, after the Bangkok Declaration by Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Brunei joined ASEAN in 1984 and Vietnam in 1995. It aims to promote regional economic, social, and cultural cooperation. The ASEAN economies have demonstrated a great potential for rapid economic growth. Singapore is usually regarded as one of the Asian 'Tiger' economies, exemplifying the benefits of economic liberalism, while Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia have been viewed as emerging 'Tiger' economies. The reason for the exclusion of China and Japan was the desire to ensure that the ASEAN economies were not dominated by the big economies of East Asia. ASEAN sees its role as being a counterweight to these major powers and to the United States.

ASEAN has a secretariat and has made progress in regional cooperation, especially in the economic field. It has not made any significant advances in regional military and security matters. ASEAN led the ASEAN Regional Forum initiative which involves cooperation with the EU and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation countries (APEC). Although the economies of Indonesia and Thailand were severely affected by the tsunami in 2004, the ASEAN grouping continues to show great economic dynamism and has scope for enlargement by admitting other South East Asian countries.

Other regional IGOs of note are the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), founded in 1964 to promote economic integration

among a dozen Arab states; the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), which aims to develop integration and promote economic development among Caribbean countries; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), founded in 1975 to promote regional economic cooperation among 17 member states; the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), founded in 1985 to promote economic, social, and cultural cooperation among South Asian States; and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), founded in 1992 to promote economic, social, and cultural cooperation between Southern African States.

None of the IGOs listed above is anywhere near as far advanced down the route of regional economic integration as the EU. However, they all have the potential to serve as useful mechanisms for strengthening economic development in their respective regions. As with the EU and other IGOs much will depend on the quality of the political leadership and the political will of their member states.

The Commonwealth

The final example of an IGO I shall briefly examine is the most unusual of all. It is not a regional IGO. The Commonwealth is a voluntary organization of 53 states, no less than 25 per cent of the states in the international system. Most, but not all, were formerly under the rule of the British Empire. It is the second largest IGO in the world and includes states from every region of the world except the Middle East. The Queen is the Head of the Commonwealth, although the organization includes republics, such as India, as well as countries which continue to recognize the Queen as their monarch. Conferences of the Commonwealth Heads of Government are held every two years, and all decisions are reached through consensus. Decisions to admit new member states have to be unanimous. It is obvious that the Commonwealth is not a power bloc. It is held together largely by shared values and

by the desire to maintain this voluntary link with Britain and with other Commonwealth states. In addition, the Commonwealth provides a channel for obtaining additional technical assistance, training, and education resources. As one who has had the privilege of working as an adviser on one of the Commonwealth's major education projects, I am greatly impressed by the value of the scheme involved and the new possibilities it opens up for young people to change their lives by acquiring both new knowledge and a greater understanding of totally different cultures and political, social, and economic problems. The Commonwealth is above all about people power and discovering shared values as well as 'capacity-building' in the wider sense.