



## **THE UNITED NATIONS AT 80**

### **PROVIDING THE STAGE OR SETTING THE RULES FOR THE GLOBAL CONCERT OF POWERS?**

**Institut Pierre Renouvin, Université Paris 1 -- Panthéon Sorbonne, 5 March 2025**

Paris, 6 March 2025  
RE/29905c-is

Speaking at an international roundtable conference at Sorbonne University in Paris, the President of the International Progress Organization, Dr. Hans Köchler, likened the creation of the United Nations upon the end of World War II to the emergence of Europe's "Concert of Powers" after the Napoleonic Wars. Seizing the moment, the victorious countries – in both instances – aimed to establish an order where they would be the principal guarantors of peace and stability, and the "lesser" states would have to accept the formers' primacy under the auspices of peace and the greater common good. The self-righteousness of the Holy Alliance of 1815 (operating within the Concert of Europe's "Quadruple Alliance") was mirrored in the attitude of superiority of the "Great Four" in 1945 who as "sponsors" of the UN Charter reserved for themselves (plus France) the role of arbiter and enforcer of global order. As permanent members of the Security Council, those countries, or their successors, continue to be able to operate in an extra-legal space – in the legal vacuum of *realpolitik* – and can do so indefinitely: due to the provisions of Article 27 in tandem with Article 108 of the Charter, they can shield themselves from the very rules they are empowered to enforce against everyone else. Thus, Dr. Köchler explained, the United Nations system of collective security risks being rendered dysfunctional – not by accident, but by design – whenever a permanent member of the Security Council threatens the peace or commits an act of aggression.

The striking dichotomy between the neutral wording of Security Council resolution 2774 (24 February 2025) (consisting of one short single sentence), sponsored by the United States and supported by permanent members Russia and China, but not by any of the Council's European members, and the long text, full of references to legal and moral principles, of General Assembly resolution ES-11/6 (23 February 2025) on the same subject (peace in Ukraine) has again made us aware of the role and impact of *realpolitik* in a fateful question of war and peace.

Thus, Dr. Köchler explained, in the framework of the UN, the global balance of power is being negotiated among the Security Council's most powerful permanent members. At this juncture, the "P3" (United States, China, Russia) are effectively in a position to claim, or bargain about, spheres of influence, without fear of any serious legal repercussions.

Proclamations and assertions in recent years – and weeks – from each of those countries have made more than obvious that ultimately it is the national interest, not the rule of law, that guides their behavior among each other and vis-à-vis the world community. Also, nuclear peace has been preserved, so far, essentially due to mutual deterrence, not the letter of the law. This begs the question, the speaker concluded, whether the United Nations Organization can do more than provide the backdrop for a “Global Concert of Powers” that – even more than its 19th century predecessor – because of explicit statutory provisions operates in a space free of effective legal constraints. Eight decades after the organization’s founding, no remedy is in sight.



The meeting at Sorbonne University was attended, among others, by speakers from France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Russia, Sudan, and the United States of America. It was concluded with the presentation of a book about "Non-alignment in a Multipolar World" (AAKAR Books, New Delhi) to Professor Hans Köchler who wrote the Afterword to the publication.

\*\*\*


#### **MMXXII – War or Peace**

Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2023  

#### **Responsibility in International Relations**

International Roundtable Consultation, Vienna, Austria, 2023  

#### **Sovereignty and Coercion: The United Nations in the Web of Power Politics**

International Roundtable Consultation, Istanbul, Türkiye, 2024  



**INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS ORGANIZATION**

Vienna · Austria

[www.i-p-o.org](http://www.i-p-o.org)