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THE WORLD GOVERNMENT V UNITED NATIONS: A COMPARISON OF INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

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INTRODUCTION

According to Oppenheim, “International Law is the name for the body of customary and treaty rules which are considered legally binding by civilised states in their intercourse with each other”. It has been argued that international law is not a true law² as it lacks enforcement mechanisms. Jurists like Austin and Frederick Pollock have argued that international law is not a true law because it lacks a sovereign authority to enforce it and lacks a global enforcement mechanism³. This makes it a soft law unlike domestic laws governing different nations. In theory, international law being centralized and having a sovereign authority to enforce laws can ensure global peace and security and reduce conflicts among nations. This concept has been depicted in the popular anime One Piece which shows the World Government as a powerful organisation⁴ with an alliance of over 170 nations which governs the Blue Planet⁵. Although it is fictional, it has depicted some of the important principles of international law like authority, enforcement and securing justice.

But in the real world, the United Nations (UN) is the main international organisation where nations gather together, discuss problems and find solutions. It believes in principles of sovereign equality, resolving disputes through peaceful means, etc, unlike the World Government in the anime which follows an authoritarian approach. It consists of 6 main organs which is created to maintain peace and security, resolve disputes and promote human rights. But the United Nations has been criticized for lack of authority, lack of enforcement, the quality of UN staff and poor management⁶.

This article aims to compare the structures of the World Government and United Nations (UN) by examining the enforcement powers, decision making powers, formation, etc. It will also analyse whether or not the World Government could solve issues of real-world international problems by

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² 'Is International Law Real Law?: The Debate Explained' (The Law Studies, 13 January 2023) <https://www.thelawstudies.com/2023/01/international-law-real-law-truth-debate.html>

³ 'Nature of International Law [With all theories and Approaches]' (Law Xperts MV, 2 December 2022) <https://www.lawxpertsmv.com/post/nature-of-international-law-with-all-theories-and-approaches>

⁴ 'World Government' (Villains Wiki) https://villains.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government

⁵ 'World Government' (One Piece Wiki) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government

⁶ Weiss, Thomas G. “What’s Wrong with the United Nations and How to Fix It.” *Polity Press*, 2016.

discussing the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a system similar to the World Government in the real world.

MEMBERSHIP AND FORMATION

The World Government was formed around 800 to 900 years ago after defeating the Great Kingdom. It was formed during the Void Century where there was an Ancient Alliance of rulers of 20 kingdoms. After the war with the Great Kingdom, this alliance gained a lot of power and formed the World Government. Nineteen of the founding royal families moved to Mary Geoise, the capital of the organisation. The Celestial Dragons, the descendants of these families, hold a lot of influence and power in the One Piece World. Over the years, the World Government gained power and now it consists of a federation of over 170 nations⁷. While these nations can function independently over their internal matters, they are obligated to adhere to the principles and laws of the World Government. The organisation functions through its various branches such as the Marines, Cipher Pol and Seven Warlords of the Sea in order to enforce laws and military powers. But the system of the Seven Warlords of the Sea has been dissolved.

The United Nations (UN) was formed in 1945 after World War II⁸ in order to promote peace and prevent future conflict. From April 25 to June 26, 1945, the representatives of 50 countries gathered at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco⁹. They drafted and signed the UN Charter which helped create the United Nations (UN) which they had hoped would help prevent another global conflict¹⁰. The United Nations (UN) came into existence on October 24, 1945 after the Charter had been ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other signatories¹¹. In 1945, when the United Nations (UN) first came into existence, it consisted of 51 member states¹². But now, it has grown to 193 member states. States become a member of the UN by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council¹³.

⁷ 'World Government' (*One Piece Wiki*) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government

⁸ 'United Nations Charter (1945)' (National Archives) <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/united-nations-charter>

⁹ Muhammed Ali Yetgin and Sait Çakmak, 'Birleşmiş Milletlerin Terörle Mücadelesinde 1972-2020 Yılları Arasına Dair Raporlarının Analizi' (2021) 5(2) *Stratejik ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 207 <https://www.acarindex.com/stratejik-ve-sosyal-arastirmalar-dergisi/birlesmis-milletlerin-terorle-mucadelesinde-1972-2020-yillari-arasina-dair-raporlarinin-analizi-1117185>

¹⁰ 'International Affairs Vaani: It is Time to Reform, Reimagine and Reboot the United Nations' (News18, 8 April 2025) <https://www.news18.com/opinion/international-affairs-vaani-it-is-time-to-reform-reimagine-and-reboot-the-united-nations-8632486.html>

¹¹ United Nations, 'History of the United Nations' (*UN.org*) <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un>

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *The United Nations (Course Hero, 2023)* <https://www.coursehero.com/file/229974062/The-United-Nationspptx/>

The World Government hold authority when it comes to their member nations. They tend to intervene in the affairs of member nations. As for non-member nations, the World Government mainly ignores them. There have been instances where the World Government exploit these non-member nations. One instance is the 'Native Hunting Competition' where the citizens of an island are slaughtered for the entertainment of the Nobles¹⁴. As for United Nations (UN), States become members to it by the decision of the Security Council. Membership is open to all peace-loving States that accept the obligations under the UN Charter and are able to carry out¹⁵ these obligations. The non-member states, on the other hand, are offered a standing invitation by the UN to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly while maintaining Permanent Observer Missions at the Headquarters¹⁶.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING

The governance of the World Government can be divided into the following sub-headings

JURISDICTION

The World Government has absolute jurisdiction over member nations. They tend to exercise authority over the entire Blue Sea. But as for non-member nations, the World Government tries to send their agents into these nations to accomplish their objectives.

LEVELLY

It is a council which consists of rulers of different countries. They meet every 4 years and discuss current affairs and talk about developments.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The pirates on the show are usually sentenced to death when they are caught. There are various courts portrayed in the show. One of them is Enies Lobby which is the highest court. There are no real trials held here. Once the pirate is arrested, they are directly executed or imprisoned. At the Marineford Headquarters, there is also a court where they also punish the pirates. There is also a travelling court known as a Judicial Ship where judges go to the place where the pirates/criminals reside in order to convict or execute them instead of taking them to Enies Lobby¹⁷.

¹⁴ 'World Government – Relationships' (*One Piece Wiki*) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government#Relationships

¹⁵ 'UNGA 2019: What is UNGA, Impact, Significance, UNGA Members' (Jagran Josh, 27 September 2019) <https://www.jagranjosh.com/current-affairs/unga-2019-what-is-unga-impact-significance-unga-members-1569581354-1>

¹⁶ United Nations, 'Non-Member States' (UN.org) <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/non-member-states>

¹⁷ 'World Government – Governance' (*One Piece Wiki*) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government#Governance

IMU

There is an Empty Throne which signifies that no person holds power over the world. But, Imu sits upon this throne secretly which makes him have supreme authority. The existence of Imu is only known to the Five Elder's.

FIVE ELDERS

The Five Elders are considered the Highest Authorities of World Government¹⁸. They are a council of 5 highest ranking of Celestial Dragons. They look after the government affairs who are responsible for maintaining peace of the world.

CELESTIAL DRAGONS

They are the descendants of the royal family who founded the World Government. This makes them hold immense power and can act without worrying about laws. They act as they want to without the fear of law enforcement.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

After Imu and the Five Elders, this is the 3rd highest authority in the World Government. They control the military under the World Government. They are responsible for the hiring of the Marine officers. They oversee the officers¹⁹.

THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) CONSISTS OF 6 MAIN ORGANS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

It is the main organ of the UN²⁰ which comprises of the representatives of member states. These member states get one vote.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The council consists of 15 Member states and each member gets one vote. The council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security²¹.

¹⁸ Ajith Kumar, 'Five Elders (Gorosei) in One Piece: Names and Powers' (Beebom, 11 September 2024) <https://beebom.com/one-piece-five-elders-gorosei-names-powers/>

¹⁹ 'World Government – Organizational Hierarchy' (*One Piece Wiki*) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government#Organizational_Hierarchy

²⁰ Joel Bhagwandin, 'Maduro's Non-Recognition of the International Court of Justice is Unmeritorious' (Guyana Standard, 3 December 2023) <https://www.guyanastandard.com/2023/12/03/552559/>

²¹ 'The organs of the UN' (Legal Xpress News, 15 July 2023) <https://legalxpress.news/legalnews/MTEyMg==/The-organs-of-the-UN>

The decisions of the Council are binding in nature on the members.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

It is a council where environmental, social and economic issues are debated. It also recommends policies.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN). It is responsible for settling disputes between States and also provide advisory opinions.

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

The council provides international supervision to 11 Trust Territories.

UN SECRETARIAT

They are responsible for carrying out the daily work of the UN. It oversees the programmes and policies of the other organs of the UN²².

The United Nations is a multilateral organisation where its powers are distributed to its 6 main organs. The decisions of the organisation are made according to the majority and depends on the voluntary compliance of the member states. But, the World Government, on the other hand, is an authoritarian organisation that implements decisions through its military power.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The laws in the anime One Piece are not known to be documented. They are all been expressed through words or orally made known to people. It has been portrayed in the anime what are some of the acts which are considered a crime. One of the highest crimes is the research of the Void Century where it prevents people from learning the Ancient Weapons. Anyone who defies this leads to total eradication. Another serious crime is piracy. An individual who becomes a pirate end up becoming wanted by the World Government after they commit a certain amount of crimes against the citizens. They either end up being imprisoned at Impel Down or get executed based on the gravity of the crime. Slavery is also prohibited for centuries, but the Celestial Dragons still engage in it and the World Government turns a blind eye to it as they hold immense power²³.

²² United Nations, 'UN Structure' (United Nations) <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/un-structure>

²³ One Piece Wiki, 'World Government – Laws' (Fandom) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Government#Laws

To enforce laws, there is no body or agency under the United Nations (UN). But according to Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, the Security Council may take enforcement measures to maintain international peace and security²⁴. Furthermore, it can take acts of enforcement through the United Nations Police (UNPOL) that is tasked with promoting international peace and security through support of its member states in conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations²⁵. Thus, while the UN has no army, it relies on the member states to provide the necessary troops²⁶.

The World Government has full control over the enforcement of the law. It enforces laws throughout the Blue Sea through the Marines, Cipher Pol or the Seven Warlords of the Sea (now discontinued). It executes orders without the consent of the people or considering public opinion. The United Nations (UN), on the other hand, does not have the power to enforce laws throughout the world. It depends on the sovereignty of the nations where it cannot intervene in the internal affairs of nations. It can only provide advisory opinions which are not binding on nations.

ETHICAL ISSUES

As discussed, The World Government has an authoritarian model. It has been known for violating basic human rights. One such incident is the Ohara Island where the citizens of the Island were eradicated for researching about the Void Century. The island consists of the Tree of Knowledge. It also consisted of archaeologists who were secretly studying and researching about the history of the Void Century. When the government found out about this, it ordered for the eradication of the entire island through the Buster Call. Except for Nico Robin, one of the residents of the island, all the other citizens were eliminated by the government through the Buster Call²⁷. The Celestial Dragons are given immunity from the law as they are the descendants of the royal family who founded the World Government. They can buy and sell humans without being afraid of the consequences. One such incident occurred at the Sabaody Arc, where there was a Human Auctioning House where pirates and other humans were being sold and bought as slaves²⁸. The government had turned a blind eye to it as it was being run by the Celestial Dragons which shows that the government favours the elite even when they are wrong and violating human rights.

²⁴ United Nations, 'Maintain International Peace and Security' (United Nations) <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/maintain-international-peace-and-security>

²⁵ United Nations Police, 'United Nations Police' (United Nations) <https://police.un.org/en>

²⁶ United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Working with us' (United Nations) <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/working-with-us>

²⁷ One Piece Wiki, 'Ohara – Citizens' (Fandom) <https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/Ohara#Citizens>

²⁸ One Piece Wiki, 'World Noble – Sabaody Archipelago Arc' (Fandom) https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/World_Noble#Sabaody_Archipelago_Arc

Although, the United Nations (UN) works towards upholding the principles of International Law, promoting human rights and maintaining international peace and security, it has some challenges or drawbacks as well. One such drawback is its lack of enforcement. The recommendations of the Security Council cannot be applicable to all nations and it depends on the voluntary compliance of member states which makes it less effective. The organisation is dominated by Western countries which leads to the likelihood of bias and lack of representation. There has also been cases of corruption within the United Nations (UN). A former employee of the UN had sued the secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, for corruption²⁹. It has also been criticised for being male-dominated. There is still a lack of equal representation.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ADOPTING THE SYSTEM OF WORLD GOVERNMENT IN THE REAL WORLD:

The idea of adopting the system of the World Government in the real world would seem like a good idea especially when it is strict with enforcing laws as international law in the real world is a soft law but there are some advantages and drawbacks of adopting it.

ADVANTAGES

- As discussed above, the jurisdiction of the World Government is absolute and binding on all member nations. They even have jurisdiction over the internal affairs of the nations. In the real world, enforcement of international laws depend on the voluntary compliance and cooperation of nations which makes it difficult to enforce rules. Adapting the system of World government would help turn international law into a hard law.
- It would also help in enforcing laws a lot faster, as right now, enforcement of international laws requires the permission of nations according to the principle of sovereignty. This can slow down the urgent action that needs to be taken to solve global conflicts. But this system can help with faster enforcement of laws whenever there is a crisis or prevent conflicts without waiting for the permission of the nations.
- The doctrine of rule of law by Dicey can be upheld by adapting this system where one law governs the nations which ensures equality. It can also help countries not

²⁹ Julian Borger, 'UN tribunal finds ethics office failed to protect whistleblower' *The Guardian* (London, 27 June 2012) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/27/un-tribunal-whistleblower-james-wasserstrom>

use loopholes where they use their domestic laws in order to escape international obligations.

- It would provide more enforcement power to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as it has a weaker enforcement power and can provide advisory opinions which are not binding on nations. This system would help the decisions of ICJ be more binding on nations and ensure justice.
- It can also help the nations to be united in all matters which can reduce conflicts between them and help improve relations.

DRAWBACKS

- There can be abuse of power. As we discussed earlier, the Celestial Dragons bend the laws as per their will and are not afraid of the consequences because they hold immense power in the World Government. It was also portrayed in the anime of Marines being bribed by pirates and other powerful individuals. One such instance was Arlong paying off a Marine officer to stay silent of the crimes he had been committing which prevented him from being arrested³⁰. Adapting this system into the real world could also lead to power being abused by the higher authorities.
- There can also be less accountability by the government. Imu and other higher authorities can exercise their power without limitations which can lead to them not being accountable when they make mistakes or omit their duties.
- Culture and customs can be overlooked if only one law or jurisdiction is adopted, as it can lead to the marginalisation of minority groups.
- There is a high likelihood of human rights violations as pirates and other accused are executed or convicted without a proper trial. It is a well known principle that every one deserves a defence or everyone deserves a fair trial. This principle is not followed particularly in the anime. Thus, adopting this system can violate basic human rights and also UNHCR.
- Human rights can also be violated when high authorities like Celestial Dragons exercise their power ignoring the laws.
- There are high chances of bias as well where public officers and high authorities like Celestial Dragons are not held accountable when they omit duties and violate laws.

³⁰ One Piece Wiki, 'Arlong – Marines' (Fandom, 2024) <https://onepiece.fandom.com/wiki/Arlong#Marines>

- The freedom of knowledge and other basic freedoms can be suppressed as seen in the anime. One such example was the Ohara Island, where the entire island was eradicated for studying the Void History. This is denying of the right to have information and knowledge. When adapting this system, the freedoms of citizens like information and knowledge can be suppressed.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the review of the World Government compared with the United Nations (UN) shows that there are completely different systems when it comes to governance, structure and law enforcement. While uniform universal law sounds good, it has been displayed as being very oppressive in the anime and even disregarding basic human rights as well. World Government functions as an authoritarian system, where it prioritises in controlling and that illustrates the issue of authoritarianism that the viewing audiences could see.

On the other hand the United Nations (UN), while having its own detriments, works on the basis of diplomatic, sovereignty and cooperation. The United Nations (UN) structure is a good and fair representation of diverse groups or people and reflecting on its functional structure is able to create if not an all encompassing dialogue room, there is room for discussion rather than utter domination. However its lack of enforcement and a belief states will abide by the voluntary compliance can effect, at times, response to crisis and conflict.

Therefore, international governance is necessary for relationships or maintaining friendly relations with each other, it must uphold the notions of respecting and abiding by human rights, going through both accountability and sovereignty inclusive. World Government is a great examples of what can go wrong when laws or practices do not take those into consideration.

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