

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

IJS - 36 NOTES ON ENLIGHTENMENT AND  
TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IV:  
SOME CONCLUSIONS

P. O. Box 14246  
Nairobi, Kenya  
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Mr. Richard Nolte  
Executive Director  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
535 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10017  
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Attached you will find the final installment of my four part series about the problems of transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment.

This newsletter attempts to tie together the lessons learned from my consideration of CERN and the Nordic Cultural Convention and undertakes to summarize my argument on behalf of limited purpose, multinational organizations in matters of enlightenment.

Since this series is a continuing essay, I have used continuing pagination to relate each part to the whole.

I hope that the series has put the activities of various transnational organizations interested in issues of enlightenment into a context which better allows critical evaluation of their activities.

Sincerely,



Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

#### IV. SOME CONCLUSIONS

When one compares the success or promise of success of CERN and the Nordic Cultural Convention, which are limited, multinational agreements and agencies, with the weaker record of the grander international organizations in terms of actual impact on national enlightenment processes, then it seems clear that one ought to draw some tentative conclusions about the appropriate roles of transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment, the appropriate institutional forms for that cooperation, and the implications for analyzing international policy matters.

Construed broadly the role of transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment varies immensely, depending upon the actual area one is considering: the scope of multinational cooperation in providing resources for doing high energy physics is great, because high energy physics is so expensive that few countries can afford the facilities. However, few disciplines and/or areas of potential cooperation are as dependent upon massive facilities as high energy physics; for example, attempts at research cooperation on a transnational basis in regard to molecular biology, astronomy, and space have been noticeably less successful in Europe, although the latter two share with high energy physics the high price tag but not the need for massive, single location facilities.

Astronomy and space research have not shared with high energy physics in its heyday the existence of a coherent transnational community of interested scholars who have played integral roles in national and transnational politics. This tells us something more about another condition for successful transnational cooperation in the research component of enlightenment matters: a scholarly community with a clear vision of its own priorities and an ability to articulate persuasively those priorities in the processes of national and international enlightenment politics.

The Nordic Cultural Convention experience and prospects suggest that the most effective multinational cooperation in matters of enlightenment will come when those countries which share similar socio-cultural backgrounds and which face similar problems attempt formal, multinational cooperative venture in a climate which has already generated ad hoc cooperative exercises. One note of caution should be added: even when there is a relatively common socio-cultural background and similar problems, it is crucial for any cooperation which requires positive actions instead of only restraint (which distinguishes enlightenment cooperation from public order questions) that all participating states enjoy relative political stability. This condition is especially important in enlightenment matters which affect cultural considerations that may be politically significant in national systems -- e.g., issues of language and history. This qualification is especially relevant to multinational ventures in the Third World.

The issue of appropriate institutional form for transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment cannot be resolved in terms of any single solution. But both CERN and the Nordic Cultural Convention can offer some insights into appropriate institutional alternatives. The CERN Council

arrangement of scientific/specialist and governmental representatives from each country seems especially well suited to transnational agencies which deal with issues of enlightenment, because of the importance of having both political cooperation and direct representation from the specialized communities with specific interests in the activities of the agency. And the mixed representation allows the perspectives of the politician to balance and be balanced by the views of the specialist. In this regard the Nordic Cultural Convention involvement of experts in the issues under consideration, who are drawn from local and national institutions, seems helpful, because it highlights the national and local focus of many transnational enlightenment activities.

The fact that most enlightenment activity takes place within national systems means that it is of great importance for transnational agencies to adopt the "service" attitude of CERN and the relatively low profile of the Nordic Cultural Convention Secretariat. But both the low profile and the service attitude must be tempered by a commitment to involve the transnational organization in the actual activities of the local systems within the national context.

I would argue that the shortcomings of the grander international institutions and the strengths of the limited, multinational organizations suggest that in matters of enlightenment the best strategy is to clearly delimit the brief of the transnational organization: this limitation may be in terms of activities or in terms of geo-cultural considerations. But I would qualify this position with four exceptions: for the limited purposes of allocating access to limited international resources such as communication channels; for protecting fundamental human rights with an enlightenment component, such as freedoms of speech, press, and education; for coordinating the activities of the ever enlarging universe of organizations which are consistent with my position; and for assisting in the establishment of new transnational organizations. In regard to these exceptional problems and roles, the nation-states need one or more grander international agencies with broad purposes and extensive jurisdiction. And for most of these problems potentially or actually effective grand international institutions already exist. But for the hard work of transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment, the models of CERN and the Nordic Cultural Convention seem to me to be quite sound.

This emphasis on limited purpose institutions of transnational cooperation in matters of enlightenment is based upon my belief that the grander agencies have failed to have any significant impact on enlightenment problems in the national systems. In a world of nation-states -- and in fact more local communities -- which, in spite of attempts at regional and even international government, is the world which we presently know and which seems to be secure in the foreseeable future, the success of transnational cooperation can only be measured by its impact on the nation-state. This observation holds true, I believe, for enlightenment processes in general and educational activities in particular.

Of course there are many technological and social trends which cut against the nation-state and local focus of my analysis and which enhance the interdependencies among nations and the particular interest communities among them. Especially in the development of telecommunications systems one finds matters which can be dealt with only on an international scale; the same is true in a number of high technology disciplines and the enlightenment concerns of multinational business corporations. These particular areas where the international parameters of decisions are especially important deserve the services of truly international organizations. But even in these areas the actual impact on life in individual nation-states may be better controlled and mediated through a network of special purpose and/or geographically delimited cooperative institutions instead of solely through international organizations.

My argument implies that transnational organizations can best serve the whole universe of transnational interests by organizing themselves around particular areas of shared interest among nation-states. Usually this organization would be in terms of geographical, regional characteristics, but it may also be in terms of special areas of shared interest or background. OECD in some ways represents the latter approach in enlightenment affairs, as do the international monetary policy bodies such as the Group of Ten and the Group of Twenty in the arena of international finance. A danger in this interest and background approach in transnational institutions is that it often segregates the rich from the poor in a manner which almost always is at the expense of the poor. But in matters of enlightenment, the rich/poor dichotomy could be dealt with by organized sharing among transnational interest groups: e.g., transnational cooperative ventures in computerized telecommunications could probably best be developed by a consortium of industrialized nations which cuts across hemispheric and other geographical divisions; but the technology which results from this specialized cooperation ought to and could be shared with countries at other stages of industrial and technological development; indeed this sharing should be mandated as part of any basic compact.

The whole area of international communications systems is the area with greatest potential for successful international and multinational cooperation in the processes of enlightenment. Cooperation not only in the regulatory sphere, which is already a matter of continuing international monitoring authority, and not only limited to the provision of hardware on the model of INTELSAT, but also in the provision of actual production and transmission resources on a cooperative basis, both for general entertainment and instruction. The greatest promise in this sphere will be for multinational cooperation on the model of the Nordic Cultural Convention activities in television coordination. But there also may be an opportunity for a truly international agency to play a constructive role in providing a whole range of broadcasting resources to various national systems. Here the CERN rationale of limited national resources entailing multinational or international cooperation may be applicable; although the community of interest in such a project on an international scale may be lacking.

My general support of limited purpose, multinational organizations to deal with most enlightenment problems distinguishes my analysis from the majority position among writers on international law, organizations, and politics of international cooperation. Writers on international problems who approach them from a policy oriented perspective such as McDougal and Lasswell, on the one hand, and Richard Falk, on the other, emphasize "inclusive" international institutions and truly international constitutive processes for deciding policy issues and controlling transnational activities in enlightenment issues. (I should indicate the judgment is interpretative, because their writing on strictly enlightenment affairs in the international context is limited to an occasional remark in other contexts.)

In the best of all possible worlds, grand, inclusive solutions might be the best; but even then there would be a real threat to diversity among societies if international enlightenment policy were subject to decision of a universal constitutive process. And in this least best of all possible worlds, strong, limited purpose, multinational organizations would be in a better position to represent the interests of the participating states in deciding enlightenment issues which have transnational implications. Also, the decisions of such limited purpose, multinational organizations would be more likely to have impact upon enlightenment policies in participating states.

Before closing I should reiterate a point which I made in the introduction to this essay: I am writing from the perspective of the industrialized minority of nations in the world. Nothing I argue here should be interpreted to suggest that a truly international organization is not necessary to encourage the transfer of resources -- financial and intellectual -- from the rich to the poor. However, I would argue that the industrializing nations of the world could better put their own houses in order if they undertook their own cooperative ventures within limited purpose, multinational frameworks rather than just rely upon the largesse of international assistance institutions. Although I should qualify this last point on two grounds: first, that such cooperation requires political stability among the national participants; and second, that such ventures ought to still have international financial assistance. But with these qualifications, my multinational emphasis would apply even in the case of developing nations.

My general policy position in regard to enlightenment ventures on a transnational scale is that these matters can best be dealt with by many and varied multinational organizations confronting particular problems. States participating in these organizations must always carefully consider the broader implications of the decisions made by the limited, multinational constituencies involved. The inclusive interests of all participants in the international community must have a legitimate claim on the activities of these limited purpose and limited membership institutions. But in the present world order, the less grand the transnational institution and the less broad the scope of its activities, the more likely it is to succeed.

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