

Peace and the War Industry

Edited by
KENNETH E. BOULDING

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Non-governmental Organizations

LOUIS KRIESBERG

When the fourteenth World Ploughing Contest was held in Christchurch, New Zealand, in May contestants from every part of the globe arrived to take part. An equally diverse group assembled in Munich last July for the International Dairy Congress. Tokyo will be the scene of the World Road Congress later this year, and the British Paper and Board Makers' International Association of Paper Historians convened in the university town of Oxford in September. Doctors of many nationalities will gather in cities on every continent to discuss recent advances and obstacles in specialized fields of medical research.

Such international nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) now number almost 2,000, compared with fewer than 200 at the beginning of the century. They include groups with interests ranging from bicycling to nuclear physics.

The burgeoning of such organizations is due largely to

the increasing specialization of both work and leisure activities in industrialized societies. Aided by the increasing speed and decreasing cost of international travel and communication, people with special interests are crossing national boundaries more and more often to compare notes and promote common goals in groups such as the International Chamber of Commerce and the International Union of Health Education. With the exception of sharp drops preceding the two world wars and during the early 1950's, the rate of NGO formation has increased steadily.

NGO's may help ease world tensions. Perhaps they are even an index of the extent to which a world society already exists. They foster the development of international perspectives by reinforcing interests that cross-cut national boundaries. Their activities ameliorate the material and social conditions—the hunger, disease, and overcrowding—that underlie certain international conflicts. Formulas for settling international dissension may be developed in them and then incorporated into international law. They may even develop structural arrangements for handling conflicts among their own members that can later be used by governmental organizations such as the UN and its affiliates.

Most NGO's are concerned with occupational activities. Scientists the world over, for example, share interests in better crop yields and the conquest of crippling and killing diseases.

These like or common interests may spur them to joint efforts; and even their national differences may provide the basis for complementary interests and active exchange. But as members of different political systems, the members of various occupational and other kinds of organizations may also have some conflicting interests. This would seem especially likely between Americans and Soviets.

Can Americans and Soviets put aside their enmities to

promote, as members of the same voluntary organizations, common or complementary rather than conflicting interests? Is cooperation—a significant step beyond mere coexistence—really possible? A recent study I made of the nature and membership of NGO's suggests that it is.

About one-third of all NGO's restrict membership to some geographic area. Of the remaining, 21 percent have members from both the U.S. and U.S.S.R., 50 percent from the U.S. but not the U.S.S.R., 3 percent from the U.S.S.R. but not the U.S., and 26 percent from neither. If the generally high U.S. level of participation in NGO's and the very low Soviet level are considered, this means that the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are more likely to be in NGO's with each other than in NGO's in which the other is not represented.

The likelihood of joint membership varies further with the type of organization. NGO's which are made up of workers—for example, trade union organizations—are numerous, but there are few in which both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are represented. Such organizations constitute about 10 percent of the NGO's in which the U.S. but not the U.S.S.R. is represented, 14 percent of the ones in which the U.S.S.R. but not the U.S. participates, and 17 percent of the NGO's to which neither the U.S. nor the U.S.S.R. belongs; but they constitute only 1 percent of all the NGO's in which both nations participate. The pattern for NGO's in the area of commerce and industry is similar: 11, 4, 18, and 2 percent, respectively. On the other hand, in science and scientific research, the percentages are quite different: 4, 0, 2, and 18 percent, respectively.

NGO's may be classified in terms of their potential for consensus. The types are intended to reflect the varying degrees to which members of the international community, and particularly the U.S. and U.S.S.R., share goals and beliefs about the means to reach these goals.

- Type 1 NGO's are concerned with technology, science, medicine, or sports. Consensus is presumably relatively high.
- Type 2 consists of the social or economic NGO's organized by employer, profession, or trade union; they include groups in commerce and industry, social and political science, law and administration. In these, consensus is presumably moderate.
- Type 3 includes NGO's dealing with matters about which consensus is presumably low—philosophy and religion, international relations, social welfare, education and youth, and the arts. The arts are included because officially recognized writing, painting, and film-making in the Soviet Union tend to be dominated by the aesthetic of "social realism," a highly idealized depiction of Soviet life that strongly promotes the Soviet ideology.

On the whole, the findings presented in Table I show that the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are most likely to be represented in organizations concerned with matters of presumably high consensus. About half of the NGO's in which they both participate are in the science-health category, while among the organizations in which neither participates, only about one-fifth are concerned with such matters.

In areas in which consensus is high, issues are often viewed as technical matters. Where consensus is low, value differences are likely to be prominent. But as a consideration of organizational structure will show, the extent to which an issue is viewed as a technical or a value matter is not inherent in the issue itself.

Even when Americans and Soviets find sufficient cause to become members of the same NGO's, some areas of conflict inevitably remain. How do organizations with such joint membership keep from being hamstrung by continual dissension? How do they carry out their day-to-day activities so as to minimize potential conflict?

The fact that these organizations often have higher levels of activity than those in which either or both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are absent is ample evidence that the former organizations, despite the risk of disruption, do function quite well. They are more likely than the latter to report engaging in activities such as coordinating research; providing services like libraries, abstracting services, and training programs for members; and developing standards or agreements about nomenclature and uniform codes.

The puzzling feature of the situation is that they do so without any relative increase in the size of the organizational staff which might seem necessary for carrying out these operations. This is because, with considerable personnel, the staff or an executive secretary often has relatively great power in the organization's policy formation. The delegation of such power to staff members is not likely to occur in an organization whose members have many conflicting interests—each side fears that the staff is in league with the other. It is not surprising, then, that NGO's with joint Soviet and American participation are somewhat less likely than others to have staffs of ten people or more.

Further decentralization of power in NGO's with joint U.S. and U.S.S.R. participation occurs due to the relative simplicity of organization—that is, the small number of organizational levels. The rank and file are not isolated from the decision-making core by an elaborate superstructure. However, even in the absence of such centralized decision-making, there are few general meetings in which the rank and file can participate directly in policy formation.

Taken together, these findings show some baffling inconsistencies. Joint U.S. and U.S.S.R. participation does not seem to lessen organizational activity, but the development of a large staff to implement this activity may be inhibited. Similarly, an elaborate number of organizational

levels may be lacking; but frequent general membership meetings are not substituted to compensate for this structural arrangement. These inconsistencies are partially resolved when we consider one other organizational characteristic: the number of committees in the NGO's.

Despite the jokes about committees and their proliferation, they can be a useful device for organizations. They tend to transform problems from political issues to be decided by bargaining and negotiation to technical matters to be resolved by consensus among experts. Thus, the distinction between technical and nontechnical issues depends largely upon the persons trying to solve the issue and how they handle it, not on the issue itself or on the content area. If the mode of reaching a decision involves logrolling and bargaining and the style of the discussion is polemical debate, the issue will be nontechnical and political. Certain conditions can make such features more prominent. If the participants have clear constituencies who can hear the discussion, if there are many constituencies represented, and if the question is phrased in such broad terms that basic value differences are attached, then the issue is not likely to be viewed as a technical one.

Establishing committees can affect these conditions. Committees meet in relative privacy, and constituents do not hear the discussion. Members of a committee may be selected because of their specialized knowledge—their “expert” qualities; this makes it more likely that they will discuss the issue in technical terms and feel independent of definite constituencies. A small committee limits the number of constituencies involved. Handing problems to a committee usually means first dividing the problem into some of its components, and this makes each component seem relatively technical. And fundamentally, a few persons meeting regularly and frequently can develop rules of

TABLE I—TYPE OF NATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN NGO'S

Type of NGO	U.S. and U.S.S.R.	U.S., but not U.S.S.R.	U.S.S.R., but not U.S.	Neither U.S. nor U.S.S.R.
Science, health, etc.	53	22	18	18
Economic, social, etc.	28	41	43	56
Religion, art, international relations, etc.	19	36	39	26
Total	100	99	100	100

TABLE II—NUMBER OF NGO COMMITTEES BY TYPE OF NGO AND NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Number of Committees	Science, health, etc.		Economic, social, etc.		Religion, art, international relations, etc.	
	U.S. and U.S.S.R.	Not U.S. and U.S.S.R.	U.S. and U.S.S.R.	Not U.S. and U.S.S.R.	U.S. and U.S.S.R.	Not U.S. and U.S.S.R.
None	52	75	47	64	50	69
1-6	14	5	9	10	11	8
7-10	7	1	4	4	3	2
11 or more	9	1	11	3	6	2
Some, but number not given	18	18	28	19	31	19

discussion and common understandings. The shared understandings diminish value differences.

The number of committees NGO's have is highly associated with whether or not the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. both participate in them. (See Table II) If the U.S. and U.S.S.R. both participate, the NGO is much more likely to have committees than if either or both parties are not represented. Of course, large NGO's tend to have more committees than small NGO's. But even holding the size factor constant, those with joint American-Soviet participation tend to have the most committees.

The use of committees, then, shows ways that organizations can be integrated along international lines and still maintain their activities somewhat independently of the amount of consensus or conflict among their members. It also shows that international give and take—for example, the sort of open exchange that can occur in frequent general membership meetings—must often be limited in order to assure the functioning survival of such organizations. These restraints circumscribe their role in fostering international contact, but NGO's can and do still serve as pilot projects for improving world cooperation.

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FURTHER READING SUGGESTED BY THE AUTHOR:

Preventing World III: Some Proposals edited by Quincy Wright, William M. Evan, and Morton Deutsch (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962). See "Transnational Forums for Peace" by Evan, a discussion of ways NGO's contribute to international peace.

International Non-Governmental Organizations by Lyman C. White (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1951). Descriptions of membership in and activities of a variety of important NGO's.

Soviet Sport by Henry W. Morton (New York: Collier Books, 1963). The history of sports activities in the U.S.S.R. and

changes in its participation in international events.

The International Labor Movement by Lewis L. Lorwin (New York: Harper and Bros., 1953). The history of changing relations among trade-union organizations of the U.S.S.R., the United States, and the rest of the world.

Yearbook of International Organizations (Brussels, Belgium, Union of International Associations, 1966-67 edition). A comprehensive dictionary of all existing, incipient, and deceased international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, together with information about activities, structure, membership, address, and officers.