

Southwell u3a Geopolitical Discussion Group: 8th February 2024 meeting Introduction

The truth, as they say, is often stranger than fiction. As a one-off session very different to all that has gone before, we have gone for a macro-level global topic that is so far-fetched that it might well be fact: This one is a “biggie”, huge in its geopolitical implications, though complicated and difficult to get one’s head around. Be brave and ready to expand your thinking skills!

As background, have a think about how much you know about the international bodies that aim to create global peace, security and stability via an “international rule-based order”. This link is a useful starter if you can’t think of any: <https://world101.cfr.org/global-era-issues/globalization/six-essential-international-organizations-you-need-know>

Read and consider whether you agree with all, any, or none of the following, and have anything say!

1. Is an “international rule-based order” desirable, possible, a pipe-dream, and how does an international body come to fair decisions and enforce its findings on a “failing” country?
2. There is some hand-wringing in the press about how the international rule-based order is breaking down. Are there any countries who care little for this international rule-based order unless it suits them?
3. Imagine a scenario where a global organisation, such as the UN, the International Criminal Court, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, International Trade Organisation or World Health Organisation manages to persuade most or all sovereign countries to sign up to a charter or legally binding agreement. The Agreement is then used to apply pressure to any or all signatories to comply with an evolving set of requirements from that body. Is this scenario possible? Probable? Already happening? Impossible? A good thing?
4. Critical in the geopolitics of our new “global world” is the engineering of situations whereby nations cede sovereignty to global bodies – WHO, UN, WTO, and then ensuring the leaders of those bodies are “influenced” by the wishes of the leading nation. Can you think of examples? To start – [“The Universal Declaration on Human Rights”](#).
5. In the case of the WHO, do you think that China skilfully ensured the WHO leader was “theirs” during the COVID pandemic, and thus criticism from the WHO was, even at its loudest circumspect and muted.
6. For now, focus on the “World Health Organization”. Imagine that one “Body”, which might be a country, bloc of countries, a political or religious movement or large multinational business then infiltrates the WHO and manages to place its own choice of people in the main positions of influence. These then propose and drive through a charter on how future pandemics are to be met by a united global response. This is duly signed by countries, giving that charter huge “moral” and indeed “legal” strength and power.
7. A pandemic comes along, the WHO then leads the global response in a way that favours the “Influential Body”. All good? What could possibly go wrong? Indeed, would and could such a scenario ever happen?
8. Reflect back to Richard W’s Geopolitics session on “99% Organisation” with us in October 23, discussing and giving evidence of how “Big Business” has a clear interest in taking over the world. In that session & prep, we saw how (mainly Western) “Big Business” is running up against big countries and power blocs, which have their own strategic and long-term plan to dominate the world using all forms of hybrid “power” (or covert warfare), many of which are not readily available to big business. These thus has even more levers and strings than Big Business, and those that are not democracies (so tied to election cycles) can think longer – term and across a wider brief.

9. Looking at the WHO, do you feel it is essentially a political and partial organisation, or an impartial body that balances competing demands to maximise world health? Is there any evidence to suggest it is controlled by a) Western “Big Pharma” b) a single country/ political bloc or c) some other powerful interest.

Now for the tough but meaty main course:

In Autumn 2023, the WHO requested all countries to debate and sign up to “Amendments to the IHR 2005”. This sounds seriously tedious boring routine stuff, and indeed most newspapers were not falling over themselves in enthralling their readers with a blow by blow account! However, several thoughtful politicians noted that the changes potentially hand draconian powers to the WHO. The parliamentary debate was led by Andrew Bridgen the now independent ex Tory MP who was chased out of the party on what many would suggest were trivial charges because he had led debates on COVID vaccine harms: His actions were seen by some as hostile to the interests of certain countries, industries and vested interests, not least vaccine producers, the Chinese and some multinational drug companies, and some would say he paid a heavy price for speaking out. He, with John Redwood, could see that without wasting a single bullet, “Big Pharma” and/or “PRC” would stand to gain huge advantage from these “boring amendments”. The irony is that bodies that are themselves not in the least democratic manage to use democracy to twist it to their own ends.

Research / Preparation:

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=kaHI0upEOJM&si=khrrPFfIYz1D3RIN> And the petition debate at

<https://www.youtube.com/live/xAs1cmIPXoc?si=ttkrsyovkw008WRf>

WHO Treaty for pandemic preparedness: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9550/>

Do you agree or disagree with what John Redwood said at:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-18/debates/945EBBB4-D052-4CF7-8109-B39FF7FF919D/InternationalHealthRegulations2005>

Andrew Bridgen, who followed John Redwood in the House debate, spells out the issues clearly. What do you think of Hansard Column 426WH?

MP Philip Davies wades in – Column 433WH: *“Is it not even more extraordinary that that power would be given to that person, given that, as I understand it, the UK voted against his becoming the director general of the World Health Organisation in the first place, and he was China’s man for the job. Does that not make it even more extraordinary that the UK would want him to have those powers?”* Is Mr Davies making a valid point?

Debate on treaty: https://youtu.be/GkhjH2ySMUw?si=r_SWkJKPdRvD8rrs

Debate on Health Regulations : <https://youtu.be/ooKyYEvIhYk?si=Wm7PLhXYzPVSPV2P>

<https://youtu.be/kaHI0upEOJM?si=J2SutKWD0E-2OAEe>
<https://youtu.be/1-E-MSK8dwM?si=ymFmJeWYx03jptOs>
<https://youtu.be/41qDaeJ2Bg0?si=1vTBHAtDFUGKLXpN>
https://youtu.be/9rB6bTPOHKg?si=cDGyNz_REdw6zbL6 it
<https://youtu.be/7gs8ZKK9TSs?si=sciNzjDsBAOrPhj> is
<https://youtu.be/GkhjH2ySMUw?si=9VuY2IlePwWTzYq3>

<https://youtu.be/ooKyYEvIhYk?si=5yeymivJ92EtaLDU>
https://youtu.be/RotNYdpM8cE?si=-9mmRXZsSCOCa_z-
<https://youtu.be/GkhjH2ySMUw?si=Febd26JM1qXEQpzJ>

Useful summary of implications: <https://opiniojuris.org/2023/02/27/the-proposed-amendments-to-the-international-health-regulations-an-analysis/>

An update which is a good summary of WHO and quite an optimistic view:
https://youtube.com/watch?v=kaHI0upEOJM&si=NoiJjjNXL_2CiEb0

It is likely that we will spend most of our time looking at the WHO in this context, but have a think about other global bodies – what effect is the UN having on peace in the Middle East, Red Sea, Hamas/Israel? What forces are being brought to bear on the ability of the UN to be a “impartial global policing authority”? How effectively does the World Trade Organisation ensure a level playing field between small and large countries, blocs and economies?

RL

January 2024