

BACKGROUND

- Globalization has resulted in an increasingly interconnected world
- Multilateral institutions are not designed to address our current needs
- UN system designed around sovereignty
- Global governance reform a must be grounded in a specific framework

SOVEREIGN OBLIGATION

- Coined by Richard Haass (2017)
- Sovereignty comes not just with rights but also with obligations to other nations
- Currently absent from global health literature

This project aims to build a case for sovereign obligation to become a mainstream concept in conversations around multilateralism

METHODS

- Case study analysis: ‘preliminary illustration of a theory’ (Odell, 2001)
- Selected cases from all international health-related treaties and regulations negotiated within UN system
- Non-systematic review of grey and peer-reviewed literature

Case Study 1: International Health Regulations

Background

- Governs pandemic preparedness and response
- Balancing global health and international trade

Sovereign Obligation in the Language

- Collaboration on meeting obligations
- Notification requirements
- Oversight mechanisms geared towards transparency

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Increased regulation of global public goods
- Official development assistance
- Enforcement mechanism

Case Study 2: The Codex Alimentarius

Background

- Standards to govern food safety and trade
- Voluntary participation, national control over regulations

Sovereign Obligation in the Language

- Impossible to fully regulate food systems at a national level
- Representation on the commission

Opportunities to Strengthen

- Enforcement mechanisms, but balanced participation
- Better aligned with other regulations (labor, nutrition, etc.)
- Geared towards establishing and maintaining food systems in low- and middle-income countries

References:

- United Nations General Assembly. (2020). Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. (GA Resolution 75/1). <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/248/80/PDF/N2024880.pdf?OpenElement>.
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