UN @ 75:
RETHINKING
MULTILATERALISM

Pol Bargués (coord.)

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CIDOB

BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

In collaboration with:

MINISTERIO
ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNIÓN EUROPEA
Y COOPERACIÓN

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PROLOGUE: THE UNITED NATIONS @ 75

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In a speech at the second Paris Peace Forum in November 2019, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres warned of "five global risks, or widening fault lines", whose underlying causes could only be addressed by strengthening "multilateralism". First, he referred to the broken relations between great powers and their competition over economic, technological and geostrategic interests. Second, he cited the weakening of the social contract, and the increasing inequality that has led to widespread social unrest and protests. Third was the lack of solidarity motivated by the rise of populist, racist and nationalist narratives that turn societies inward. The fourth fault line was the climate emergency, which requires greater celerity and determination. Finally, Guterres came to the technological divide. New technologies bring great potential to transform societies but also to deepen inequalities, while posing risks to governments and individuals, from disinformation to cyberattacks. Facing these challenges, Guterres said multilateralism was indispensable: "What country is capable of bridging these fault lines in isolation, separately from the rest of the world?"

These fault lines have widened in 2020. The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has led to a global health crisis that has dramatically accelerated

current dynamics in international relations. The rivalry between the US and China mounts, while global cooperation dwindles. Technology has enabled many of us to work from home, but the coronavirus crisis has destroyed millions of jobs and widened social inequalities between those who can and cannot adapt to changes in their workplace (potentially providing fertile ground for the populists of the future). For many, COVID-19 is also a warning of the climate-related crises to come. The greatest challenge to the UN since its creation after the Second World War may have arrived on its 75th anniversary. The question of how to strengthen multilateralism and global cooperation appears ever more pressing in the light of the coronavirus.

This CIDOB Report is an attempt to think about the challenges that currently affect the UN and offer pathways for the reform and strengthening of multilateralism and global cooperation. The report is structured in two parts: the first addresses how the UN has dealt with today's key challenges, while the second offers analysis and recommendations for tomorrow.

In the following chapter, Anna Ayuso examines the current reforms of the development agenda, which is closely linked to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to "Leave no one behind". In the third chapter, Pol Bargués reflects on the evolution of peacekeeping operations towards a model of sustaining peace, which requires reform of UN forces to make them better coordinated, more reflexive and agile, and to focus more on conflict prevention and sustaining peace in conflict-affected societies.

In chapter four, Moussa Bourekba explores the UN's shift towards a preventive approach to terrorism and violent extremism, where a combination of hard-security approaches and non-coercive measures has evolved to tackle the drivers of the radicalisation of individuals and groups. In chapter five, Carme Colomina addresses how the heavy machinery of the UN architecture struggles to adapt to the new interdependencies and vulnerabilities – new digital divides and media landscapes, multiplying information and disinformation – brought in by the ongoing digital transformation of economies and societies. Héctor Sánchez Margalef, in chapter six, draws parallels between the critiques and constraints that affect both the UN and the European Union. In the context of growing contestation, both organisations must accelerate their reforms to cohere their strategies and preserve a rules-based multilateral system.

The second part of the report seeks to advance proposals and suggestions for a renovated UN. In chapter seven, Emmanuel Comte critiques the strict measures of state control of international migration flows. He then

proposes a new global migration regime organised around a liberal theory of justice that considers the inequality of opportunities created by closed borders. In chapter eight, Hannah Abdullah discusses the challenge of cultural diversity in a globally interconnected world. She calls for renewed investment in UN programmes and policies in the areas of cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue to enhance the UN's peace and sustainable development agendas. Along similar lines, in chapter nine, Eva Garcia-Chueca explains how local governments, in their capacity as representative institutions, should play a larger role in the international governance agenda.

In chapter ten, Eduard Soler argues that unilateral impulses are a threat to the global rules-based order and to regional organisations around the world. He evaluates the extent to which regional cooperation may be the saviour of multilateralism and help us cope with global challenges such as the current climate and health emergencies. In the last chapter of the volume, Marie Vandendriessche draws some parallels between the climate and the COVID-19 crises, such as their planetary scope, need for international cooperation, and the economic and social costs involved in addressing them. In her view, climate change action must find a way to work rapidly, effectively and collectively to address a critical problem with a long-term horizon.

September 2020

THE UNITED NATIONS: REVISITING THE CHALLENGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Promoting development was part of the original United Nations mandate and is one of the three pillars of the UN Secretary-General's proposed reforms. The 2030 Agenda is the roadmap for development policies and strategies, but to be implemented successfully structural problems must be solved on governance, effectiveness and solvency and enhancing the multilateral system's legitimacy.

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The development agenda is a central axis of the debate on the role of the United Nations and the need to adapt the institution to the changes in international society over the last decades. Development is one of the three pillars, together with Management, and Peace and Security, on which the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres structured his reform agenda at the beginning of his first term. According to Guterres (2018) it will be a reform "more focused on people and less on processes, more on results and less on bureaucracy". This area of reform is closely linked to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) whose motto is "Leave no one behind".

Expectations of change emerge every time a new secretary-general is elected, but they often fail or are frustrated for multiple reasons. As the former Director-General of the World Health Organization Gro Harlem Brundtland has pointed out, most of the blame lies with member states (Brundtland, 2019). Resistance to change is unlikely to be lower on this occasion, however, there is a general feeling that it is not possible to continue business as usual due to an accumulation of dysfunctions in the current development model that affect its sustainability. The United Nations system faces a crisis of gover-

nance that erodes multilateralism in its current form, calling into question its effectiveness in terms of contributing to development. But, above all, it is suffering from a crisis of legitimacy that makes an in-depth review of the system more necessary than ever on the 75th anniversary of the UN's founding. In addition, it faces an endemic funding crisis that has been aggravated by the COVID-19 outbreak. Reform means renewal, but it also means learning from the lessons of the past and avoiding repeating previous mistakes. Many of the difficulties reforming the institution result from political confrontations between states that prevent the achievement of the aspirations of the people to whom the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations was addressed and to whom universal economic and social progress was promised.

A look at the past to envisage the future

International cooperation "in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character" is part of the original mandate established in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, an objective intrinsically linked to the maintenance of peace and security. The right to development has been one of the central themes of debate since the Third World movement emerged from the Bandung Conference in 1955 and the claims for the emancipation of peoples in the aftermath of the decolonisation process. This movement encouraged the first Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, the creation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1965 and the adoption of four successive ten-year development strategies. The East/West confrontation during the Cold War and the North/South tensions after the decolonisation process conditioned the claims and demands of developing countries and, coupled with the effects of the first oil crisis in 1973, led to historic General Assembly resolutions 3201 S-VI, approving a programme for the establishment of a new international economic order, and 3281-XXIX establishing the Charter of the Economic Rights and Duties of States, both in 1974. A year earlier, the Club of Rome's report "The Limits to Growth" warned of the impossibility of continuing the current growth model for the whole planet.

THE REFORM OF THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE SDGS WHOSE MOTTO IS "LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND".

In 1978 the Independent Commission on International Development Issues chaired by Willy Brandt issued the report "North-South: a programme for survival", which called for a conference on cooperation and develop-

ment to be held in 1981. This was shortly before the foreign debt crisis and the rise of the neoliberal wave led by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. This disruptive conjuncture set back development demands for nearly a decade and the dictates of structural adjustment programmes dominated the international economic agenda. A decade later, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the recognition of the failure of previous development decades led to an intense review of development strategies. Then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali initiated an intense period of international conferences that shaped shared agendas in strategic areas of development policies, creating the basis of what today is the Sustainable Human Development Agenda: among others, were the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993; the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994; the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995; and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul in 1996.

Under the leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Millennium Summit was convened in 2000 to push for a new development agenda more focused on the basic needs of the poorest countries by concentrating efforts on the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the first time, clear indicators and time-bound targets were defined, as well as monitoring mechanisms, through periodic reports. Despite the achievements of the MDGs in reducing poverty and increasing access to basic needs some critics raised questions about their reductionism, because the limited goals did not include all the dimensions needed for growth and social progress, nor did they take into account the inequality gaps between and within countries. Kofi Annan also began his mandate in 1997 by presenting a reform package. He promised "greater unity of purpose, greater coherence of effort and greater agility in responding to an increasingly dynamic and complex world" (UNSG, 1997). In March 2005, a few months before the end of his second term, Annan presented the report "In Larger Freedom: Towards development, security and human rights for all" (UNGA, 2005). Despite facing strong resistance to changes in the General Assembly during both mandates, he intended to save part of the reform on the eve of the Millennium+5 Summit, but his initiative was aborted after a never-ending list of amendments diluted the proposal into vagueness and the bulk of the reforms were stalled.

THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL IN 1989 AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE FAILURE OF PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT DECADES LED TO AN INTENSE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.

His successor, Ban Ki-moon, took office in January 2007 and focused his reform proposals on security and improved management. During his second term he also pushed forward the process of drawing up the SDGs for the 2030 Agenda with a firm commitment to an unprecedented consultative and participatory process that would truly constitute a universal agenda. The global objectives were aimed not only at overcoming poverty and hunger, but also at solving problems of violence, discrimination, environmental degradation and sustainability, equity, human rights and good governance. However, the implementation of this ambitious agenda requires structural problems to be solved that have been dragging the organisation down for decades.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA REFORM PROPOSED BY GUTERRES IS HINDERED BY MULTIPLE CRISES THAT WERE DIAGNOSED LONG AGO, BUT TO WHICH NO SOLUTION HAS YET BEEN FOUND.

A multifactorial crisis

The implementation of the United Nations development agenda reform proposed by Guterres is hindered by multiple crises that were diagnosed long ago, but to which no solution has yet been found.

First, there is a *crisis of governance* which makes it difficult for the international institutions to make decisions and to respond quickly to changing situations. At this level, one of the challenges that the organisation has faced is to ensure the coherence of the whole system. The functionalist design that the organisation has adopted since its inception, with multiple sectorial independent bodies, has been an obstacle to the coherence of the whole system, despite the reforms made to strengthen the role of UNDP and the implementation of programmes on the ground. The report of the current Secretary-General on "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all" (ECOSOC, 2018) calls for a paradigm shift with strong changes in strategic planning. According to Guterres's report, "the current model has reached its exhaustion point and is insufficient to match the ambition, effectiveness and cohesion required by the 2030 Agenda" (ECOSOC, 2018). This is why entities need to adopt an inter-agency approach that goes beyond coordination to encourage collective action in favour of the same agenda, both among the different agencies and in the field. One of the aspects that has been identified as crucial for the reform is to intensify coordination at regional level. The current lack of precision in the division of labour leads to duplications, overlaps within agencies and the misuse of regional platforms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the monitoring of progress in each region.

Second, the above-mentioned organisational shortcomings also lead to a *crisis of effectiveness*. Concerns about the accountability of the United Nations has been a recurrent issue for many years, but the 2030 Agenda makes it more necessary to address these problems head-on. The inter-governmental oversight mechanisms that have been established must provide strategic direction, foster a culture more focused on results than processes, give room for innovation and demonstrate greater flexibility in order to take rapid corrective actions based on empirical evidence and in-corporating lessons learned. At present, there is a data gap to adapt the decision-making pro-cess to reality. The SDGs agenda requires an im-provement in the quantity and quality of data available to all. The data revolution should be accompanied by governance that ensures eq-uitable access to new technologies and quali-ty information on development indicators on a universal basis. Initiatives such as The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSD) launched by the General Assembly in 2015, which created the Data4SDGs Toolbox, and the Sustainable Develop-ment Solutions Network (SDSN) are important elements, but there are still multiple gaps at the national and local levels. In its 5-year strategy, GPSD describes how:

THE COVID-19 CRISIS HAS HIGHLIGHTED HOW ASYMMETRIES IN ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGIES LIMIT THE EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO A HEALTH CRISIS.

> too many people are invisible in the data and therefore invisible in the decision making. Too many countries simply do not have the resourc-es for integrated birth or detention registration systems, for mapping camps and houses, for assessing the impact of climate change, and for collecting and sharing information on people's health, access to water, food and other basic services (GPSD, 2019).

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted how asymmetries in access to knowl-edge and technologies limit the effective response to a health crisis.

Third, another of the shortcomings facing the process of implementing the SDGs is the *legitimacy crisis*. The United Nations development system is the product of an intergovernmental structure that hinders interaction with other development agents. While the current structures have been incor-porating other actors, they are not fully prepared to support the demands of inclusive alliances and participatory planning processes. In the process of preparing the 2030 Agenda, citizens and others contributed to shaping it. Now they should be fully involved in its implementation. The Global Alliance convened by SDG17 requires stronger collaboration between governments,

the private sector and civil society, together with the United Nations, to mobilise the fulfilment of the agenda's objectives. To achieve this, it is necessary to seek alliances for sharing specialised knowledge, technology and material capabilities. The United Nations reform process can learn from the experience of the participatory process of preparing the 2030 Agenda to incorporate bottom-up dynamics, not only in the consultative process, but also in the dynamics of updating and evolving regional, national and local development strategies. In line with the necessary increase in democratic legitimacy, the demand for a United Nations Parliament seems too complex given the large number of member states, but the idea of an assembly of parliamentarians from regional organisations to liaise with national parliaments is plausible and could help strengthen the regional dimension of the development strategies.

THERE IS A CLEAR LACK OF RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE THE AMBITIOUS GOALS OF THE SDGS. THE 2019 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT NOTED THAT CURRENT FINANCING IS NOT ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS ADOPTED IN THE COMING TEN YEARS.

Fourth, and overwhelming all the weaknesses previously mentioned, there is a persistent *financial crisis*. On the one hand, there is the defaulting of some states on their mandatory quotas, which puts the system under permanent pressure. In October 2019 the Secretary-General had to raise the alarm about the lack of liquidity to pay for salaries and basic services (UNSG, 2019). But there is also a problem with the way development programmes are financed, most of which are voluntary contributions, and 91% of which are earmarked for single-entity projects. This high level of earmarked funding limits the system's ability to act coherently and causes problems for policy integration, data management and partnership building. This form of funding also undermines accountability for system-wide results. In addition, fragmented funding creates incentives for competition rather than collaboration. Finally, there is a clear lack of resources to achieve the ambitious goals of the SDGs. The 2019 High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development noted that current financing is not enough to achieve the goals adopted in the coming ten years. An independent study has estimated that the financial gap for eradicating poverty in Developing countries to implement the 2030 Agenda is $222 billion per year (Marcus, Manea, Samman and Evans, 2019). But according to IMF study "delivering on the SDG agenda will require additional spending in 2030 of US$0.5 trillion for low-income developing countries and US$2.1 trillion for emerging market economies" (Gaspar, Amaglobeli, Garcia Escribano, Prady and Soto, 2019). The United Nations should be able to monitor this gap through greater scrutiny of the Financing for Development Agenda alongside financial agencies and the private sector.

Conclusion: The 2030 Agenda as a driver of change

Since the SDGs already provide a roadmap for the orientation of development policies and strategies, Guterres's proposals for development system reform focus on achieving greater coordination and accountability in the functioning of United Nations agencies on the ground (UN-SDG, 2019). However, the kind of structural change needed cannot be achieved without generating political support from member states and a recovery of the legitimacy of multilateral institutions. For the time being, the position of the current United States administration does not make this task easy. The threat made by the Unites States to cut funding to the World Health Organisation at the height of the COVID-19 crisis is an example of its lack of commitment to the international cooperation system. The outcome of the United States presidential elections in November 2020 will undoubtedly be a major conditioning factor in the performance of a reform agenda leading to a reinvention of a system that too often shows signs of fossilisation. But an even more important factor is that the United Nations should show itself to be closer to the needs of the people and less hostage to the spurious interests of governments and financial lobbies. More transparency, more representation and more effectiveness are necessary elements to advance in a reform that emphasises results and leads to greater and better alliances with other organisations, states and civil society. This is the only way to mobilise resources and political will. The 2030 Agenda is a unique opportunity and a drive for change as never before. However, it will need to address the same obstacles that have always hindered international cooperation and confront the dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which has revealed the weaknesses of the current design of the international institutional structure.

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LOWER EXPECTATIONS AND CARRY ON:
THE UN AND THE CHALLENGE OF "SUSTAINING PEACE"

Seeking to break with its reputation for unwanted complications, sexual scandals and serving Western interests, António Guterres is determined to find a new direction for UN peacekeeping forces: better coordinated, more reflexive and agile, and able to adapt to concrete demands. Is there a future for UN peacekeeping troops as mere facilitators consigned to work in the background? In what follows, I will discuss the transition from peacebuilding towards "sustaining peace", sum up the key advances and anticipate potential weaknesses.

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Introduction

In a Security Council meeting of March 2018 on how to improve the record of United Nations (UN) peace operations, Secretary-General António Guterres launched a new initiative, "Action for Peacekeeping". This was meant to mobilise all partners and stakeholders to support the UN in the key tasks of conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The challenge is enormous, he said, because UN forces "now operate in far more dangerous, complex and high-risk environments" (UNSC, 2018). Guterres counselled refraining from "creating unrealistic expectations": "I urge the Security Council members to sharpen and streamline mandates and put an end to mandates that look like Christmas trees. Christmas is over … By attempting too much, we dilute our efforts and weaken our impact" (Ibid.). He added that the role of peacekeeping forces was to support existing initiatives, rather than to offer guidance; in other words, UN forces were "a tool to create the space for a nationally-owned political solution", because "peace operations cannot succeed if they are deployed instead of a political solution, rather than in support of one" (Ibid.).

What is the role of UN peacekeeping operations when Guterres preaches modesty and restraint?

Once the ideals of promoting a "liberal peace" fade away, what does peace-keeping look like? In what follows I discuss the evolution of peacekeeping operations towards a model of sustaining peace. Seeking to break away from the poor record of past operations – which were overly ambitious and costly, intruded upon national and local politics, and generated widespread criticism – Guterres is determined to find a new direction for the use of UN peacekeeping forces: better coordinated, more reflexive and agile, and able to adapt to concrete demands. This short piece is divided into two parts. First I will explain the early euphoria and swift disillusionment with peacekeeping operations in the 1990s and 2000s. Then I will discuss the transition towards sustaining peace in order to sum up the key advances and hint at the challenges that remain, particularly in the light of unpredictable emergencies like Covid-19.

Euphoria and crisis after the Cold War

It has become obvious that the optimism at the end of the Cold War about United Nations peacekeeping operations was just an anomaly in a long history of disillusionment, Western bias and scandals. In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to UN Peacekeeping Forces, in recognition of the four decades of peace support operations in war-torn areas such as India, Pakistan, Lebanon, the Congo, Western New Guinea and Cyprus. The UN immediately sought greater influence in international politics and launched more operations from 1988 to 1992 than in the previous four decades.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS WHEN GUTERRES PREACHES MODESTY AND RESTRAINT? ONCE THE IDEALS OF PROMOTING A "LIBERAL PEACE" FADE AWAY, WHAT DOES PEACEKEEPING LOOK LIKE?

In 1992, then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali seized the opportunity presented by the end of the Cold War to empower the UN and welcome an era of extensive involvement in war-ridden societies. He introduced the idea of "post-conflict peacebuilding" to increase and broaden the tasks of the blue helmets beyond preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 212). This implied that UN peacekeeping forces could go beyond their traditional mandates of setting up buffer zones, facilitating negotiations between conflicting parties, monitoring armistice agreements and providing humanitarian aid. Since then, peacebuilding has also involved civilian personnel working alongside military forces on complex tasks for consolidating peace, such as policing, human rights protection, democratisation, aid, the strengthening of government institutions, and the promotion of political participation, often continuing long after the peace agreements and their monitoring have concluded.

As originally conceived, the success of peacebuilding relied on the success of a process of democratisation and economic development, supervised by external agencies. Between 1992 and 1996, Boutros-Ghali published "An Agenda for Peace", "An Agenda for Development" and "An Agenda for Democracy", as the three goals were seen as both complementary and valuable to international peace. However, it quickly became evident that these processes generated tension, insecurity and instability in countries affected by war. In order to contain the volatility of these processes, towards the end of the 1990s, the UN sought to strengthen institutions in weak or fragile states. The solution arrived at was state-building, where an institutional framework – the rule of law, standards of good governance, and the development of a vibrant civil society – would protect democracy, development and peace (Chesterman, 2002; Paris, 2004).

 In 2000, the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, considered that "the key conditions for the success of future complex operations are political support, rapid deployment with a robust force posture and a sound peace-building strategy" (UN, 2000: 1). Intense partnerships were required for interventions of this magnitude. Throughout the 2000s, international actors – including the European Union (EU), the World Bank and governmental agencies like the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in the United States and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit in the United Kingdom – helped the UN to promote stability by fixing states' failed or weak institutional structures. For the purposes of peace-building, they assisted in rule of law reform, provided technical assistance to government institutions and rebuilt civil society.

IN 1992, THEN UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THE END OF THE COLD WAR TO EMPOWER THE UN AND WELCOME AN ERA OF EXTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN WAR-RIDDEN SOCIETIES.

The outcome of these operations, however, did not meet initial expectations. The "liberal peace", as this period of invasive international interventions came to be known, failed to create peaceful, liberal democratic states and prompted severe criticism of and disillusionment with the UN (Campbell et al., 2011). First, operations were economically and politically costly to contributing states, which had to invest considerable resources without clear outputs. Even if war was halted relatively quickly in most countries where the UN deployed troops and civilian personnel, peacebuilding always required more support (Bargués-Pedreny, 2020). As soon as goals broadened and missions geared towards building positive peace, more complications

arose – often related to the need to accommodate politics, conflict resolution and culture (Brigg, 2010; see also Abdullah in this volume).

Second, the war on terror tainted the humanitarian purposes of international peacebuilding. During the US-led statebuilding projects in Afghanistan and Iraq scholars argued that Western humanitarian rhetoric and global norms – enshrined in democratisation, peacebuilding or the Responsibility to Protect – in fact masked neo-colonial and imperial ambitions. The UN was no longer seen as an unbiased entity in pursuit of international peace and any mission and action became suspect. As Tara McCormack summed up: "Today the ideals of international justice and the breaking down of state sovereignty are argued to be not an expression of growing international morality but an extension of American power" (McCormack, 2010: 72).

THE OUTCOME OF THESE OPERATIONS, HOWEVER, DID NOT MEET INITIAL EXPECTATIONS. THE "LIBERAL PEACE", AS THIS PERIOD OF INVASIVE INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS CAME TO BE KNOWN, FAILED TO CREATE PEACEFUL, LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATES AND PROMPTED SEVERE CRITICISM OF AND DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE UN.

Scandals also damaged the image of UN troops as neutral guardians. In 2017, an Associated Press investigation into the UN's peacekeeping troops found more than two thousand allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse worldwide, some involving children as young as twelve. Although the UN adopted Resolution 2272 in March 2016 on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, critics have repeatedly noted the limited effect of these measures when it comes to preventing such heinous crimes and assisting victims (Smith, 2017). In sum, both the tendency to align with Western interests and the scandals involving abuses and crimes called into question the UN's commitment to democracy, transparency and inclusivity and marred the organisation's legitimacy, both among local populations and internationally (von Billerbeck, 2017).

Sustaining peace and the UN's light footprint

As seen in the previous section, in the first decade of the 2000s the inevitable complications of intervention, the leaning towards Western interests, and episodic scandals increased the disillusionment with peacebuilding processes and the unpopularity of UN troops. This deep discontent has coincided with the shift towards a multipolar world order: on the one hand, the West's relative power has declined and liberalism has retreated world-

wide; on the other hand, non-Western powers have risen, and regional organisations like the African Union have taken prominent roles in peace operations. Currently, UN peace operations appear to be adapting to this changing world order in which the confidence in "liberal" peacebuilding has ebbed away (de Coning and Peter, 2019).

Importantly, the nature of contemporary conflict is also changing. More complex and intractable, today's conflicts are a far cry from inter-state wars between two regular armies, or even ethnonationalist intra-state wars. War at present seems more diffuse, porous and fragmented, and to be dominated by non-state actors that spread violence and give rise to complex governance arrangements and war economies. Think, for example, of the challenge presented by the Islamic State and other insurgent groups that contest state authorities, while affecting and regulating social, political and economic life across regions; the hybrid conflicts generated by campaigns of disinformation and new technologies; the effects of global warming on ecosystems – disrupting land management and food security – and on migration flows; or the human, economic and social consequences generated by the current global health emergency (see the chapter by Vandendriessche).

THE WAR ON TERROR TAINTED THE HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES OF INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING. DURING THE US-LED STATEBUILDING PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ SCHOLARS ARGUED THAT WESTERN HUMANITARIAN RHETORIC AND GLOBAL NORMS – ENSHRINED IN DEMOCRATISATION, PEACEBUILDING OR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT – IN FACT MASKED NEO-COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL AMBITIONS.

There is a consensus that UN responses must change and indeed the UN peacebuilding architecture has undergone a series of reforms – initiated by Ban Ki-Moon and continued under Guterres – to integrate different bodies and unite the pillar of peace and security with the pillar of human rights and development (ensuring more cross-pillar engagement). The proposal for peace operations is "sustaining peace", a comprehensive approach that is more modest in setting goals and high expectations, and which assists conflict-affected societies "all along the arc leading from conflict prevention (on which, in particular, the UN system needs to place much greater emphasis), through peacemaking and peacekeeping, and on to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction" (UN, 2015a: 8). This reconfigures UN peace operations into three key dimensions that are assessed below: an attention to human security and focus on the local level as the basis

for consolidating peace; trust in partnership and cooperation with other international and regional organisations; and the idea of sustained and prolonged interventions with no beginning and no end.

In 2015, a report by the United Nations Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations intended to reflect on the limitations of past operations and offer guidance on future operations opened with a powerful story from the community level. A three-year-old South Sudanese girl, Nyakhat Pal, had to walk through a conflict-affected area for four hours with her blind father and two dogs to receive life-saving supplies from the UN. After the treatment, she returned by foot. The spirit of the UN, explains the report, was created to provide human security and address the needs of the most vulnerable. This must remain its purpose: "The Organization will remain relevant to the extent that it responds effectively to the expectations of people experiencing great hardship, sometimes in remote and inaccessible places, and who yet demonstrate enormous resilience, pride and bravery" (UN, 2015b: iii).

THE NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT IS ALSO CHANGING. MORE COMPLEX AND INTRACTABLE, TODAY'S CONFLICTS ARE A FAR CRY FROM INTER-STATE WARS BETWEEN TWO REGULAR ARMIES, OR EVEN ETHNONATIONALIST INTRA-STATE WARS.

Today, every single UN document puts emphasis on local ownership of the peace process and the importance of engaging with host countries, civil society and local governments as key to mission success (see Garcia-Chueca in this volume). This involves serving and protecting those most in need but also consulting and listening to them, considering them as agents of peace. This sensitivity necessarily implies restricting external leadership. UN missions must rely on the existing capacities, community resilience and resources of war-affected societies to advance stability and peaceful relations. The role of UN missions is to accompany and cooperate with local agents to sustain peace. This is different from the role of past missions, which assumed the goodness of any UN action. Today there is more caution and prudence, as awareness has grown that some policies may generate unwanted side effects.

Second, the UN assumes that the scale of the challenge of sustaining peace requires comprehensive partnerships between several international, regional and local actors. While cooperation between organisations has always existed, today the UN creates deep and plural groupings of stakeholders. These groupings mobilise a variety of resources and allocate responsibilities among stakeholders. Important partnerships exist in Africa between

the UN and regional organisations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. These have been key to helping the UN address conflicts in for example the Central African Republic, Darfur, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (and even in cases where the UN has been unable to deploy troops, such as Burundi and Somalia). However, mixed operations have sometimes generated international law and human rights controversies; for example, when attempting peace enforcement or counter-insurgency and counterterrorism interventions (Karlsrud, 2019; Nel, 2020).

Another central partnership is the one between the UN and the European Union, which cooperate on diverse projects for sustaining peace. For example, in 2017 the EU and the UN launched the Spotlight Initiative with the ambitious goal of "eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls" in more than a dozen countries around the world by 2030. Initially backed by €500 million from the EU, this multi-year global partnership provides large-scale, continued and targeted support to countries and regions in their fight against sexual and gender-based violence and is grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also advances a "new way of working" that brings together all relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes, the EU, its civil society and government partners, and a conglomerate of local groups as diverse as autonomous women's organisations, grassroots organisations, the media and the private sector.

IN THE FIELD, THE UN HIDES AND DILUTES TO AVOID LEAVING HEAVY FOOTPRINTS. IN ORDER TO AVOID ERRORS, PEACEKEEPING FORCES KEEP EXPECTATIONS LOW AND CARRY ON.

Third, UN peace operations require prolonged and continued engagement. In the words of Ban Ki-Moon, "political processes and institution-building require sustained and long-term international political, financial and technical support" (UNSG, 2014: 10). In 2016, the twin resolutions of the General Assembly (70/262) and Security Council (2282) emphasised the need to "work better together to sustain peace at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions … not only once conflict had broken out but also long beforehand, through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes" (UNGA, 2018: 1). In the last few years, field operations have tended to last on average three times longer than before, and the trend is growing exponentially. Today, operations that set short-term and ambitious timelines are deemed counterproductive, as they reaffirm war tensions and exclude dialogue at grassroots level. Instead, the prolongation of external support – intervening long before the conflict has broken out and deferring the final end point – brings proximity, leeway and openness to opportunities along the way,

while averting the anguish of meeting deadlines and specific objectives. The UN and its programmes and partners endorse accompanying local actors in the long term to collectively address the vagaries of peace.

Conclusion

In 2020, the optimism about the UN leading democratisation and development processes in conflict-affected societies to achieve international peace has faded away. At the same time, the period of pessimism around international peacebuilding and state-building that led to further complications, fierce criticism and a generalised distrust towards UN troops also seems to be over. Today, the reforms initiated by Ban Ki-Moon and enhanced by Guterres are giving the UN new momentum. A mixture of greater coordination, reflexivity and inclusivity in the headquarters, as well as more caution, responsiveness and greater contextual sensitivity in field operations is bringing positive results.

The key idea here is that of sustaining peace, which is anathema to the more intrusive operations of the 2000s: "The UN's new sustaining peace concept is, then, a pragmatic alternative that is emerging in response to the failures of the determined-design approach of the liberal peace doctrine", writes Cedric de Coning (2018: 304). In this short piece I have summarised the ethos of peace operations like this: current peace operations operate at community level and are attentive to the most vulnerable, build on partnerships with multiple organisations, and are long-term. It is too soon to evaluate their outcomes. What seems clear is that the UN is striving to achieve its founding principles with prudence. The troops are becoming mere managers of crises, rather than forces for peace. For example, during the current pandemic, UN peacekeepers in South Sudan have been key in training local community leaders to raise awareness on the risks of coronavirus, as well as have renovated a care centre in a hospital so that doctors can treat patients with Covid-19.[1]

 However, while peacekeepers and humanitarian partners have a presence in many post-war areas and are useful to prevent or mitigate the effects of crises, they are increasingly translucent. In the field, the UN hides and dilutes to avoid leaving heavy footprints. In order to avoid errors, peacekeeping forces keep expectations low and carry on. Objectives are modest and flexible, meant to offer support to governments and community influencers. Peacekeepers are willing to adapt to the inconsistencies and contingencies of peace processes and swallow criticism along the way.

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NECESSARY BUT UNWANTED?
THE UNITED NATIONS' EVOLVING APPROACH TO COUNTERTERRORISM

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Preventing terrorism is as difficult as shooting at a moving target: it requires reliable information about both the target's present position and where it might move in the near future. The failure of the "global war on terror" launched after the 9/11 attacks is a clear example: the US-led military, civilian and counter-insurgency interventions have not put an end to terrorism in the "Greater Middle East". Two decades on, terrorism still represents a global threat: not only have many terrorist groups remained resilient, some have spread in ways that make prevention a complex and challenging task.

Terrorism has morphed into a transnational and multifaceted phenomenon that poses a global threat to international peace. It is no longer limited to a few groups that can be easily targeted by military and police forces: it has become increasingly deterritorialised, transnational and decentralised. Rigid hierarchical organisations have given way to transnational movements that use sophisticated technology to reach out to thousands of people worldwide, encouraging them to convert their homeland into a battleground as part of a global fight (e.g. "war on Islam" and "race war"). The recent experience with the self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq, which covered an area the size of the United Kingdom and attracted over 40,000 individuals from over 120 countries, was the perfect demonstration that violent extremism is more global and thus more democratised than ever.

But the main transformations affecting violent extremism extend beyond jihadist Salafist groups such as ISIS. As pointed out by the Global Terrorism Index (2019), the number of violent extremist attacks perpetrated by the far-right skyrocketed in 2019, rising 320%. Unprecedented mobilisations of foreign fighters in the Levant should also not obscure the fact that certain conflict zones such

as Ukraine and Northern Syria have attracted several thousands of sympathis-ers of violent extremist groups affiliated with far-right and far-left ideologies.

In this context, on its 75th anniversary, what role does the United Nations (UN) play in counterterrorism and preventing violent extremism? This arti-cle analyses the evolution of the UN's approach to counterterrorism and to preventing violent extremism before examining the multiple challenges for the UN in this field.

From terrorism to violent extremism: understanding the UN's chang-ing approach to violent extremism

In line with its commitment to remove any threat to global peace, the UN has a record of longstanding efforts to counter and, more recently, prevent terrorism and violent extremism.

IN ADDITION TO TRADITIONAL DISPUTES OVER THE DEFINITION OF "TERRORISM", SEVERAL STATES ACCUSED THE UN OF BEING USED BY THE US ADMINISTRATION AS PART OF ITS "GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR".

Well before 9/11 the UN was working on devel-oping a legal framework to help states join forces to address terrorism. It adopted resolutions con-demning many practices associated with terror-ism (like hostage-taking and hijackings), drew up lists of terrorists and terrorist organisations (including the Taliban and Al Qaeda), and resort-ed to targeted sanctions under Security Coun-cil Resolution 1267 (1999). In the wake of 9/11, which showed the increasingly global nature of the threat, the UN adapted to the spread of transnational terrorism. It primarily laid the foun-dations for a new counterterrorism architecture to counter this threat. The UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted a handful of resolutions that aimed to further involve member states in global counterter-rorism (CT) efforts. For instance, resolution 1373 (2001) imposed legally binding obligations on UN member states to adapt their legislation, strengthen border controls and to participate in international cooperation (such as exchanging information). Modelled on Resolution 1373, Resolution 1540 (2004), which fo-cuses on weapons of mass destruction, established monitoring mechanisms to ensure that states fulfil these new obligations.

In parallel, the UN has served as a platform and created structures for dis-cussions and negotiations on measures and norms to advance towards a global CT framework. The Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (2004), the Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force (2005), the Global Coun-terterrorism Forum (2011) and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (2017)

are just a few of the many achievements in this respect. Sixteen international conventions criminalising terrorism and terrorist activities have been negotiated under the patronage of the UN between 1963 and 2005 (von Einsiedel, 2016). Although these conventions are not binding, UN efforts have contributed to providing instruments and a common framework for international CT cooperation (e.g. lists of terrorist organisations, antiterrorist resolutions, freezing funds for terrorists).

All in all, the UNSC's efforts were guided by the need to address transnational terrorism. It adopted sanctions against terrorists and their sponsors, committed UN member states to implement far-reaching CT measures and used managerial compliance strategies to oversee implementation (Heupel, 2007). Although these efforts are unprecedented, the UN role in this area also generated controversy amongst member states (see Bargués in this volume). In addition to traditional disputes over the definition of "terrorism", several states accused the UN of being used by the US administration as part of its "global war on terror" (Rosand and von Einsiedel, 2010: 147). This was all the more controversial as US foreign policy in many ways contradicted the spirit of the UN (specifically, the "war on terror" and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq), not to mention the violations of the international law (e.g. Guantanamo Bay detention camp).

THE UN ATTEMPTED TO ADOPT A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH THAT PUTS THE EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION AND ADDRESSES THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM.

In this context, the UN General Assembly began to take the lead in an area where the Security Council had hitherto had the upper hand. Since 2006, the General Assembly has gradually asserted its role in building the UN's CT architecture. It proposed a new approach to terrorism and the means of countering it: rather than focusing exclusively on the use of force and sanctions to weaken terrorist groups, the UN attempted to adopt a more holistic approach that puts the emphasis on prevention and addresses the enabling environment for terrorism and violent extremism.

In 2006, the General Assembly produced a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy built around four pillars: (1) addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism; (2) preventing and combating terrorism; (3) assisting states in their capacity to address terrorism; and (4) ensuring that CT efforts do not work against the respect for human rights and the rule of law. By putting the emphasis on the need to address the "root causes" of terrorism, the UN introduced a new approach to counterterrorism. Indeed, the underlying idea of

pillar 1 is that terrorists do not become terrorists over night: they undergo a process that draws them into the hands of violent extremist groups (radicalisation). Thus, the challenge is not only to fight terrorists with force but also to address the so-called "root causes" that lead people to radicalisation and ultimately terrorism. This implies an approach that combines surveillance and policing practices with psychosocial interventions directed towards individuals and communities to prevent their radicalisation. This approach received broad support from member states and laid the foundations for constructive international cooperation in this field (Ucko, 2018: 253).

The UN went further with the concept of "countering violent extremism" (CVE). In September 2014, while ISIS was morphing into a proto-state straddling the borders of Iraq and Syria, the UNSC issued a resolution aimed at stemming the flow of foreign fighters who were joining the self-proclaimed caliphate (Resolution 2178). The resolution specifically called upon member states to "counter violent extremism". CVE was built upon the idea that the fight against terrorism and violent extremist ideologies could only be achieved by combining hard-security approaches (i.e. CT) with non-coercive measures dealing with the drivers of violent extremism (e.g. counter-messaging, policing approaches). Actually, this view is in line with pillar 1 of the UN Global CT Strategy, as explained above.

THE UNDERLYING IDEA OF PILLAR 1 IS THAT TERRORISTS DO NOT BECOME TERRORISTS OVER NIGHT: THEY UNDERGO A PROCESS THAT DRAWS THEM INTO THE HANDS OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUPS (RADICALISATION).

A year later, as ISIS carried out a worldwide campaign of terrorist attacks, the international community became concerned about the need to prevent further terrorist attacks. In this context, the UN added a new concept to its global CT architecture: preventing violent extremism (PVE). Adopted by the General Assembly in February 2016, the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism posits that prevention is a plausible method of eradicating violent extremism. It calls for the implementation of "preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism" with a focus on seven priority areas: dialogue and conflict prevention; strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law; engaging communities; empowering youth; gender equality and empowering women; education, skills development and employment facilitation; and strategic communications (including social media). While these areas were not traditionally included in counterterrorism strategies, today they are considered to be crucial areas that require governance to address the grievances that lead to terrorism.

To sum up, the UN has been substantially involved in CT issues over the past two decades, playing essentially three roles: (1) setting norms and imposing binding obligations on member states to suppress terrorism; (2) enforcing sanctions against terrorists and terrorist organisations; and (3) proposing new paradigms of action in this field (e.g. UN PVE Plan of Action). While the first two roles were essentially played by the UNSC, the third, which increasingly expands through the development of national PVE plans, is led by the UN General Assembly. One key question surrounds the extent to which these new approaches promoted by UN General Assembly affect the global CT architecture.

Is prevention better than cure? The pros and cons of the UN's PVE approach

As mentioned earlier, the General Assembly has introduced several comprehensive approaches to violent extremism: the UN PVE Plan of Action constitutes the latest iteration of its efforts not only to *counter* but also to *prevent* terrorism and violent extremism.

The General Assembly's contribution in this field is guided by the need to balance the security-driven approach to terrorism adopted by the UN Security Council. The Plan of Action focuses on two oft-neglected pillars of the 2006 UN Global CT Strategy: pillar 1, addressing the drivers of radicalisation; and pillar 4, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. This focus has considerable consequences for the nature of the UN's involvement in CT matters but above all on the spectrum of actors involved in PVE.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TERM "VIOLENT EXTREMISM" WAS AN ATTEMPT TO PUT AN END TO THE THORNY DEFINITIONAL PROBLEMS SURROUNDING THE TERM TERRORISM. YET, THE UN DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY WORKING DEFINITION FOR "VIOLENT EXTREMISM" IN ITS PLAN: IT IS A PREROGATIVE OF MEMBER STATES.

On the one hand, the focus on prevention helped to make the UN more legitimate in this field, to the extent that sensitive issues such as the fight against corruption, the promotion of good governance and the enforcement of the rule of law are framed in terms of their contribution to PVE. As a result, the UN's intervention in these fields is not seen as an intrusion into states' affairs but rather as the implementation of one of its core missions: preventing the emergence of conflicts as opposed to intervening when they occur (Ucko, 2018: 258).

On the other hand, the very nature of this preventive approach – monitoring the structural drivers of radicalisation – has an impact in terms of the actors involved at three levels: UN, national and local. At UN level, PVE enabled the

UN to bring together different agencies – including some that were unfamiliar with security-related issues – to work on PVE in a transversal manner. Hence, agencies such as UN Women, the UNDP and UNESCO have drafted their own strategy to achieve the goals set by the UN PVE Plan of Action in their specific field (respectively, development, democratisation, and gender equality). At the national level, this plan inspired dozens of states to develop their own national PVE strategy. The UN even provided technical and financial assistance to states keen on developing their own plan, as was the case for Tunisia after the Sousse attacks (June 2015). At the local level, this plan has also opened the way for the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in PVE initiatives. Not only has this allowed the UN to develop its relations with local CSOs in dozens of countries, it also has put pressure on certain countries to deepen government-civil society relations.

Compared to top-down repressive strategies, this plan certainly reflects a change of paradigm in the CT field: it proposes a preventive strategy, involving many actors and different levels, to tackle violent extremism. However, the PVE approach is also source of concerns.

The introduction of the term "violent extremism" was an attempt to put an end to the thorny definitional problems surrounding the term terrorism. Yet, the UN does not provide any working definition for "violent extremism" in its plan: it is a prerogative of member states. In practice, this causes important problems.

Firstly, states can choose a definition of the VE that fits their interests, which means that the definition will depend on their own understanding of VE as well as the areas where they want to intervene (i.e. drivers of radicalisation). Secondly, as mentioned earlier, some drivers of radicalisation are structural (lack of democracy, social inequality, corruption, etc.). In the absence of a working definition provided by the UN, how can we expect governments to address drivers for which they may be responsible, such as lack of democracy and corruption? Thirdly, the plan barely mentions other forms of violent extremist groups such as far-right and nationalist groups. This is particularly concerning given the rise of such groups and the risk of stigmatising certain countries or communities over others. Finally, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms has repeatedly stated that the vagueness of the terms used prompts human rights concerns to the extent that PVE can be perverted by states and used to make room for state abuses (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018: 8). In some instances, the label "violent extremism" is used to silence political dissent or to justify restrictions of civil liberties and violations of human rights against certain groups (e.g. non-violent radicals).

Besides this, the involvement of actors that are not traditionally engaged with security-related issues also brings potentially negative consequences. Indeed, by making PVE transversal to many UN agencies and by insisting on the potential correlation between certain grievances and violent extremism, this approach may push these actors (UN agencies, development assistance agencies) to draw up development assistance programmes under the PVE paradigm. Framing development in terms of its contribution to PVE poses two main risks: on the one hand, the trust of local actors (e.g. CSOs) in the UN and its agencies may be undermined if they are suspected of collecting information for intelligence purposes. On the other hand, there is a risk of politicising international cooperation: programmes aimed at gender equality, democratisation or good governance end up being seen by the beneficiaries as means deployed by the UN to advance on PVE. In other words, conflating security issues with development issues can seriously undermine the trust in the UN and its local partners.

As we can see, although some progress has been made in terms of approaches and strategies since the UN shift from counterterrorism to PVE, the implementation of PVE strategies raises some issues that were already present, such as the lack of definition and the misuse of PVE to restrict civil liberties.

Conclusion

To conclude, the UN has played a major role in the design of a global counterterrorism architecture. Initially led by the UN Security Council, this contribution focused on setting norms for a global CT framework and enforcing sanctions against terrorist organisations and their sponsors. Since 2006, the growing involvement of the General Assembly in this matter has led the UN to adopt a holistic understanding of terrorism and violent extremism. The Global Strategy and the UN PVE Plan of Action are telling examples of this shift. Yet, as our analysis shows, many practical challenges remain, such as the need for a universal working definition and the risk of states abusing PVE. Given these clear limitations, the UN's most meaningful contribution to the field of terrorism and violent extremism is to advocate for a preventive approach to terrorism and violent extremism.

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TECHNO-MULTILATERALISM:
THE UN IN THE AGE OF POST-TRUTH DIPLOMACY

A new hybridity of power is increasingly eroding multilateralism and impacting the work of the United Nations (UN). Technological acceleration has brought new global interdependencies but also new vulnerabilities. Societies and economies undergoing digital transformation face new digital divides, altered media landscapes, multiplying political and communication actors, and proliferating information sources of doubtful traceability, as well as deeper erosions of privacy and human rights. The heavy machinery of the United Nations architecture, governed by power balances forged out of now-distant battles, struggles to adapt to challenges and threats the digital realm poses.

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Imagine a growing collection of audio and video depicting high-profile leaders, from Donald Trump to Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, saying things they never said. Imagine the political impact and public disbelief those fake speeches, generated with machine learning technology, would provoke in a world of uncertainties, power disruptions and fast technological change. It takes only a few hours of work, less than $10 (in cloud computing resources) and access to a wide archive of United Nations General Assembly speeches to fake a credible political speech using Artificial Intelligence (AI), as verified by Global Pulse, the UN Secretary-General's initiative on big data and AI for development, humanitarian action, and peace.[1] When we can no longer believe what we see, truth and trust are hard to discern and diplomacy is more undermined than ever.

Lies have always been part of governments' foreign policy toolkit. Historically, the UN has been exposed to strategic and deliberate manipula-

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1. See https://www.unglobalpulse.org/2019/06/new-study-by-global-pulse-highlights-risks-of-ai-generated-texts-creates-fake-un-speeches/

tion, intentional disinformation and propagandist speeches. In front of the UN Security Council on February 5th 2003, Colin Powell, US secretary of state under President George W. Bush, consciously deceived the world when he accused Saddam Hussein's Iraq of possessing weapons of mass destruction. Claiming to be stating only "facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence", Powell (2003) justified a war that was "illegal" and breached the UN charter, according to former United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan. What has changed since then?

We are immersed in a technological acceleration that is transforming the concept of power, the idea of threat and the scenarios of global confrontation. Statecraft must therefore adapt to an evolving landscape in which military capabilities are not the only ultimate strength. The United States and the European Union (EU) feel overwhelmed by Chinese technological development, and the new hegemonies of power are contested using more diffuse, hybrid threats and in more diverse settings. Latest-generation disinformation has more resources, more capacity to penetrate public discourse and new avenues of political interference. It aggravates societal tensions and amplifies public polarisation. The perception of facts is now mediated by emotions, and the sense of what is or is not true seems to be a free choice. The transformation of the public sphere we are witnessing is explained not only by the crisis of traditional media systems but also by the new algorithmic order that largely controls the selective predetermination of the information we see.

WE ARE IMMERSED IN A TECHNOLOGICAL ACCELERATION THAT IS TRANSFORMING THE CONCEPT OF POWER, THE IDEA OF THREAT AND THE SCENARIOS OF GLOBAL CONFRONTATION.

Information embodies a mental framework and implies values. It is logical then that the information space is under strain not only from power contests but also from clashing models. As the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2019* stated, "new technological capabilities have amplified existing tensions over values – for example, by weakening individual privacy or deepening polarization – while differences in values are shaping the pace and direction of technological advances in different countries". And yet, artificial intelligence can also be a powerful tool for international development. The World Bank, in collaboration with other global partners including the UN, is building a Famine Action Mechanism, which relies on deep learning systems developed by Microsoft, Google and Amazon, to detect when food crises will become famines. UNICEF is collaborating with MIT on deep learning expertise to simulate images of major global cities "in ruin" to help promote empathy and connection with the suffering of those who

have experienced bombing, loss and war. There are companies using AI technology in autonomous drones to deliver critical medical supplies, such as vaccines, to rural hospitals in Africa. These examples show the enormous potential for development and humanitarian aid, but the convergence of AI with other emerging technologies also creates unprecedented vulnerabilities and risks to global security (Pauwels, 2019). There is a big technological power competition underway and growing inequalities between *tech-taking* and *tech-leading* countries. Digital acceleration widens digital divides and multiplies fundamental asymmetries.

In this context, the pioneers of the digitalisation of public diplomacy have been quickly left behind by the new reality. Politics through social media has become less about connectivity and image-building than public showcases and the disruption of the traditional dynamics of international politics. The idea of a post-truth era refers not only to the ability to penetrate the public discourse with lies, but to the intentional distortion of the truth. Diplomatic engagement requires a minimum level of shared understanding and mutual openness. But international relations have so far failed to escape today's emotion-driven reality that pushes facts to the margins, while social media "Twiplomacy" breaks with the old cultural dynamics and tempos of foreign policy. In this post-truth era, weaponising information has become a tool with which to erode opposition in any kind of political system; almighty leaders of global powers, whether in the White House or the Alvorada Palace, are able to spread lies and disinformation from their Twitter accounts and feed their own people's polarisation. As Laura Rosenberger points out "the new great-power competition won't necessarily take place on battlefields or in boardrooms; it will happen on smartphones, computers, and other connected devices and on the digital infrastructure that supports them" (Rosenberger, 2020). This information contest has created new democratic dilemmas.

DISINFORMATION THEREFORE ENTAILS A HUMAN RIGHTS THREAT BECAUSE IT CAN DAMAGE THE RIGHT TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS AND THE RIGHTS TO NON-DISCRIMINATION AND TO PROTECTING ONE'S HONOUR AND REPUTATION FROM UNLAWFUL ATTACKS.

"The near-future will see the rise of cognitive-emotional conflicts: long-term, tech-driven propaganda aimed at generating political and social disruptions, influencing perceptions, and spreading deception" (Pauwels, 2019: 16). How can multilateralism prevail in this age of post-truth diplomacy? What kind of governance can we foresee for a new reality where "automated machine processes not only *know* our behaviour but also *shape* our

behaviour at scale" (Zuboff, 2019: 8)? What role can the UN, so long overdue reform, play in this bipolar reality, torn between what Shoshana Zuboff has coined "surveillance capitalism", as global technological platforms betray the early digital dream, and political regimes that use the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic to step up techno-authoritarian social control? How can the multilateral system better understand and anticipate risks without being caught in this bipolarity?

Disinformation versus human rights

The rights to freedom of thought and opinion are critical to any democratic system. Disinformation therefore entails a human rights threat because it can damage the right to free and fair elections and the rights to non-discrimination and to protecting one's honour and reputation from unlawful attacks. At the same time, the legal and political abuse of a vaguely labelled fight against fake news has in some contexts and countries resulted in the persecution of freedom of expression or political dissent.

THE CONCEPT OF CYBERCRIME HAS OPENED A NEW DOOR TO THE REPRESSION OF DISSENT AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, SOMETHING THAT VARIOUS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS HAVE DENOUNCED.

In March 2017, a joint declaration by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples stressed that "the human right to impart information and ideas is not limited to 'correct' statements, that the right also protects information and ideas that may shock, offend and disturb". They declared themselves alarmed "at instances in which public authorities denigrate, intimidate and threaten the media, including by stating that the media is 'the opposition' or is 'lying' and has a hidden political agenda" and warned that "general prohibitions on the dissemination of information based on vague and ambiguous ideas, including 'false news' or 'non-objective information', are incompatible with international standards for restrictions on freedom of expression [...] and should be abolished".

The fact that the debates about regulating the online ecosystem have already reached the UN shows the political risks involved in establishing common standards to address the new challenges. So far, the concept of cybercrime has opened a new door to the repression of dissent and free-

dom of expression, something that various civil society organisations have denounced. In December 2019, a Russian-led, Chinese-backed resolution on cybercrime entitled "Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes" was adopted by 79 votes to 60 with 33 abstentions, despite opposition from several major Western powers. Votes in favour were cast by countries such as Cambodia, North Korea, Burma, Venezuela, Algeria, Syria, Belarus and Kazakhstan. All EU member states, Canada, Australia and the United States voted against. Opponents of the text feared that the resolution would serve to erode freedom of expression online. One month before the vote, a group of NGOs and human rights associations sent a letter to the UN General Assembly alerting that "the criminalization of the ordinary activities of the Internet by individuals and organizations through cybercrime law enforcement is a growing trend in many countries around the world",[2] and questioned the need for a specific convention for such cases. This political clash at the UN headquarters last December embodied the collision of different models and values with digital reality.

For a majority of countries around the world concerns about cybercrime have less to do with hacking attacks and identity theft and much more with the repression of political dissent. Hence, the 2019 resolution criticised the existing treaty, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, in order to make the "fighting of cybercrime" advance in ways that facilitate information control and the suppression of political dissidents. There is a tangible risk that authoritarian multilateralism could shape internet governance.

Cyber-insecurities?

Technology continues to play a profound role in shaping the global risks landscape. "Cyber-attacks" and "massive data fraud and threat" have for two consecutive years ranked among the top global risks listed by the World Economic Forum (WEF 2019: 16), together with economic and political confrontations between major powers, erosion of multilateral trading rules and agreements, loss of confidence in collective security alliances, populist and nativist agendas, and media echo chambers and "fake news". New mechanisms of cooperation on data governance are urgently needed. It is not just about the ongoing race over who owns the data, but also about what use is made of it.

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2. See https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/open-letter-un-general-assembly-proposed-international-convention-cybercrime-poses-threat-human

This need for multilateralism goes beyond states to impact on the "unprecedented new species of power" (Zuboff 2019: 352). Data concentration is empowering a limited number of global corporations. The proliferation of big technological actors and the cross-jurisdictional nature of internet activity makes responding to the challenges of cyberspace at a national level impossible. However, "there is an increasingly urgent need to establish guidelines, both at national and international levels, to accompany the progressive deployment of augmentation technologies in civil and military contexts" (Pauwels, 2019: 21). But it will not be easy to do that from an scenario of duality and structural confrontation. Global incoherence and bipolar collision – embodied by the trade and technology war between the United States and China – is shaping international relations and is at the root of the divisions between the key UN members attempting to set some sort of regulation.

Global security and stability are increasingly dependent on digital security and stability and the UN could be the space for debating values and norms in this field, setting standards and contributing to arbitration and dispute resolution. But the challenge relates not only to ensuring any changes are addressed multilaterally but concerns whose agenda should be followed. "When democracies regulate content and increase control over the Internet's architecture, they weaken democratic institutions" (Rosenberger 2020). The open and free exchange of information to empower citizens to make informed decisions lies at the heart of any democratic system. As Laura Rosenberger (2020) puts it, "in democratic philosophy, information rests with citizens; in the autocratic vision, it rests with those in power". Technological vulnerabilities can increase democratic deficits. The challenge is to build a new multilateral framework out of the architecture of control and to transcend competition in favour of cooperation.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED NATIONS:
TWO ORGANISATIONS, ONE FATE

In international relations, multilateralism implies that states consider collective opinions and positions and the effects of decisions on others. It means that states share or accommodate foreign policy interests. For many years, the United Nations (UN) was the maximum expression of multilateralism, a forum for avoiding another world war and overcoming the geostrategic confrontation of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the third wave of liberal democratisation and the consolidation of the EU in the 1990s, multilateralism became real. Today, however, the UN multilateral system has weakened and is more contested than ever. Can the EU help preserve it?

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Shared criticisms

Widespread consensus exists that the UN and the EU represent the culmination of multilateral organisation. The two bodies share the values on which the global liberal order has been resting for the last 75 years: multilateralism, respect for the rule of law and human rights, the free market, social welfare and liberal democracy. Even today the EU's existence is still justified on the basis of its assurance of peace and prosperity on the continent. The same goal – sustaining peace – is shared by the UN. In fact, all official EU treaties reference respect for and commitment to the United Nations Charter of 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

At the same time, both organisations are accused of being too slow, too bureaucratic and of having failed to secure their liberal goals. The UN is still haunted by its failed interventions in Somalia and Rwanda, and the EU its failed peace missions in Bosnia and the Western Balkans. In terms of prosperity, the UN has missed several milestones on reducing poverty and famine, while EU citizens' prosperity was dealt a heavy blow by the 2008

financial crisis and it remains to be seen how the Covid-19 crisis is going to be addressed and how it will affect the continent's prosperity in the years to come. Both organisations are constrained by differences between their member states: over and over again, state-centric views halt the development of multilateral initiatives.

Similarities

The EU's commitment to the multilateral UN system is undeniable. The EU is the biggest contributor to the UN's regular budget, peacekeeping missions and agencies. But with the UK on its way out the EU, only a EU member state will be left with a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Vincze, 2019; Pindják, 2020). And while the German finance minister, Olaf Scholz, asked France to give up its permanent seat in favour of a shared EU one, the French politely refused. The Aachen Treaty signed at the beginning of 2019 between France and Germany recognised that coordination on the UNSC was good and would to continue to be so; and both countries made it a diplomatic priority to get Germany a permanent seat on the UNSC. In fact, EU member states have been acting in an increasingly coordinated manner on the council, but it is in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) – where the EU acquired enhanced observer status in May 2011 – that coordination has been even stronger. Currently then, the EU has the right neither to vote individually nor to sit on the UNSC, although it has a voice in the UNGA debates and may present amendments and proposals. Nevertheless, the EU is represented individually on behalf of its member states in several UN bodies and agencies, including, for instance, the COPs, the FAO and almost every international conference under the auspices of the UN.

BOTH ORGANISATIONS ARE CONSTRAINED BY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEIR MEMBER STATES: OVER AND OVER AGAIN, STATE-CENTRIC VIEWS HALT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILATERAL INITIATIVES.

In fact EU member states have shown growing voting cohesion in the UNGA over time, which reflects "how much member states are willing to reconcile their national interests with those of the collective of members, and uphold a common EU position" (Jin and Hosli, 2012). Bargaining plays an important role in EU voting cohesion in international organisations and forums, so voting cohesion may be reinforced or weakened if member states have something to gain or lose in other areas. Spain has not traditionally been a blocking power and has usually aligned its foreign policy with that of the EU, especially with the Franco-German axis (with notably

exceptions like the Iraq war in 2003). In the light of Brexit, it is expected that Spain will further align its position with the Franco-German axis even if Spain has recently tried to play at bargaining, for instance when the Spanish government hinted that it was ready to explore "liquid alliances" with different member states according to its interests. UNSC reform is not a unifying topic, and Spain and Germany do not share the same view. Today, the question that remains is whether the bloc will maintain its cohesion in the light of the nationalist and recentralising drift of some member states.

Internal contestation is one of the main challenges the EU and UN share. Some EU member states directly contest EU values with policies and rhetoric. Poland and Hungary, against which the Commission activated article 7 of the Treaty on European Union over concerns about the rule of law, are just the most visible examples; other countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia or Malta have had serious problems upholding the rule of law and maintaining an independent judiciary system. Contestation is not only a matter for eastern member states: the increasing numbers of "hyperleaders" in western European countries shows the unease among democratically elected governments about the separation of powers (Gutiérrez-Rubi and Morillas, 2019). What is more, EU external action and member states' foreign policies have always obeyed legitimate foreign policy objectives that do not always match with the high values and standards that the EU, and thus its member states, claim to defend. The disunity shown in the Global Compact for Migration at the end of 2018 was a clear example (see Comte in this volume). These contradictions erode the legitimacy of the EU when it tries to project its soft power around the world and defend democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

NEVER-ENDING PROCESSES OF NEGOTIATION AND DIALOGUE AND THE DEFERRAL OF DECISIONS HAVE BECOME BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THESE ORGANISATIONS.

The UN also faces internal contestation. The legitimacy of the UN Security Council, the body in charge of protecting the world's peace and security, is weakening as responses (or the lack of them) obey the geopolitical goals of the permanent members. The fact that some permanent members have used the council's legitimacy to topple regimes that oppose their geopolitical interests has made other permanent members look upon the UN's system of governance with distrust. Middle Eastern states, for example, see it as a way of imposing a Western view of international relations (see for instance Makdisi, 2019). Moreover, the tendency to postpone goals and objectives and introduce barely modified new milestones has brought exasperation and criticism. For example, the Millennium Development Goals adopted

in 2000 and set for 2015 became the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030 in 2016, which was basically an exercise in kicking the can down the road. This governing rationality also resonates with the EU, whose constitution failed to win approval in 2005, meaning member states moved to the Lisbon Treaty four years later without addressing the root causes of the constitutional failure. Never-ending processes of negotiation and dialogue and the deferral of decisions have become business as usual for these organisations (for a critique, see Bargués-Pedreny, 2018).

Reforming or retiring?

BOTH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS FEEL THE NEED TO REFORM. THE UN IS 75 AND THE EU IS 63, AND WHILE UPDATES HAVE BEEN MADE TO BOTH MANDATES AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES, WHOLESALE REFORM IS NEEDED THAT CAN RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES THE WORLD FACE IN 2020, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF THE POST COVID-19 WORLD

Both international organisations feel the need to reform. The UN is 75 and the EU is 63, and while updates have been made to both mandates and operational challenges, wholesale reform is needed that can respond to the challenges the world face in 2020, especially in the wake of the post Covid-19 world Secretary-General António Guterres stated in his "Vision Statement" that reform would be one of the pillars of his mandate. Several member states have repeatedly demanded greater representation on the Security Council. While there are no African, Latin American or Arab countries in the UNSC, European states, especially western European states, are overrepresented.

The EU is not in itself united on the question of underrepresentation on the UNSC. Germany has been seeking a permanent seat on the UNSC as part of an informal group called the G4, along with India, Japan and Brazil. Spain, on the other hand, has banded together with EU member states like Italy and Malta to form a group called Uniting for Consensus, which has different objectives for UNSC reform. Rather than adding more permanent members to the Security Council, they argue that more non-permanent members should be incorporated whose mandate may be automatically renewed and who should be elected by the regional groups of the UNSC. Uniting for Consensus also wants to modify the veto right of the permanent members and to increase UNSC accountability. It has to be noted that tackling representation on the UNSC is not the only reform pursued by informal groups of member states, as there are also states that demand different working arrangements. For instance, Uniting for Consensus has sought to increase

the UNSC's accountability and transparency, while the countries that make up the Ezulwini Consensus call for ECOSOC to be strengthened. The Small 5 Group (Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland) has sought better cooperation between the UNSC and the UNGA and argued against veto rights in the UNSC.

Demands for EU reform are numerous. North-south and east-west divisions still exist and make evident the need for internal reforms. Scholars argue that structural reforms are required, including treaty changes, and even – difficult as it may seem – extending qualified majority voting (QMV) to other areas so decisions can be taken faster.

In sum, both organisations are committed to undertaking reforms (albeit slowly). The outcomes, objectives and the participating actors may differ but both the UN and the EU are starting their respective processes of endowing their governing bodies with meaning and legitimacy. The EU was due to launch the Conference on the Future of Europe in May 2020 (postponed because of Covid-19) and the UN has already launched a global reflection process to celebrate the 75th anniversary through resolution 73/299. As the new decade begins, both organisations need to reinvent themselves.

IN ANY CASE, THE PREFERENCE FOR A MULTILATERAL SYSTEM ALSO PREVAILS IN THE 2016 EU GLOBAL STRATEGY. SO THE WORLD THAT THE UN AND THE EU (AND SPAIN) DESIRE IS ONE LED BY STRONG MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. YET THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE HEADING THE OTHER WAY.

The reflection process launched by the United Nations seeks to strengthen the commitment of member states to multilateralism. The EU has been trying to reinforce this, too, especially now that the transatlantic link is weakening and Brexit is becoming real. In fact, the global vision the European Union espouses is the same as the one the UN aspires to: a multilateral world, where respect for the rule of law and cooperation prevail when addressing conflicts. On UN day in 2018, former High Representative Federica Mogherini said:

More than ever, our partners are looking to the European Union to stand up exactly for multilateralism and the rules-based international order with a strong United Nations at its core: as European Union, we are determined to preserve it. Investing in our partnership with the UN is natural as we share the same fundamental values and goals. Together, we join forces in our work around the world and in Europe, for sustainable development,

peace and security, and humanely and respectfully managed migration. And together we fight for education for all, gender equality and human rights (Mogherini, 2018).

The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, insisted on the same idea in her opening statements in the European Parliament: "we want multilateralism, we want fair trade, we defend the rules-based order because we know it is better for all of us. We have to do it the European way" (von der Leyen, 2019).

EU member states such as Spain share the same commitment. The strategy to guide its external action published in 2015 states that Spain abides by existing multilateral frameworks, although it sees the need to reform and adjust them to the new realities and changes taking place in a world that did not exist 25 years ago. Spain is still very much committed to the UN system (the UN is mentioned 54 times in the strategy) and supports the UN peacekeeping missions and external missions, if they have a UNSC mandate. In fact the law that regulates external action stresses that Spain will defend and promote the respect and development of international law, in particular the principles of the UN Charter.

However, there is growing awareness that the world is changing and a rules-based international order is fading away. Indicative of this awareness is the difference between the two opening sentences of the two EU security strategies: while the opening sentence in 2003 was "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free", the EU Global Strategy of 2016 began "the purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned". The EU has gone from "projecting itself into the world" with the aim of transforming it, to "protecting the EU from the world" and seeking to remain unchanged in spite of the world. In that regard, the ambitious multilateral strategy in 2003 that would integrate the visions of the three leading member states on international relations, in 2016 became a plea for reform of the multilateral rules-based order in order to adapt pragmatically to the new reality (Morillas, 2018). In any case, the preference for a multilateral system also prevails in the 2016 EU Global Strategy. So the world that the UN and the EU (and Spain) desire is one led by strong multilateral institutions and respect for human rights. Yet the world seems to be heading the other way.

A multilateral system under siege

The US, China and Russia, all permanent UNSC members, are challenging the multilateral system; each one from a different perspective. The US, a long time guarantor of the liberal order, is retreating from it and switch-

ing to the isolationism that guided US foreign policy in the early twentieth century. Examples abound, such as the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal and the cuts to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) or the World Health Organisation (WHO).

China has been a reliable partner in a number of multilateral agreements, but it remains a soloist. The main challenger to US hegemony in the multipolar world, it is building alliances beyond the traditionally Western-led institutions through organisations such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The support China offers to Africa (for example to Kenya, Zambia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia) is not attached to the rigid norms and conditionality that often comes with Western-led development aid (Sun, 2014; Li, 2017). Finally, debates over human rights also put the multilateral system under stress. China has a completely different conception of human rights to Western liberal democracies and links their protection and achievement to state sovereignty in all circumstances. Some commentators have underlined how China, like Russia, has been undermining human rights from within the United Nations, exerting pressure through the UN Budget Committee (Colum Lynch, 2018). Russia seems to have filled the power vacuum left by the US in several military conflicts, becoming an indispensable part of the solutions in Libya and Syria, for example, but also infringing the rules of the multilateral security order in Europe by invading Crimea and disrupting the eastern part of Ukraine (Remler, 2019; UNGA, 2019).

In sum, the UN's multilateral system appears to have weakened and is more contested than ever. Can the EU and Spain help preserve it?

Opportunities for the EU

Dworkin and Gowan (2019) have outlined four policy areas where the EU can act to save the multilateral system: international trade; human rights; security, migration and human protection on Europe's southern periphery; and the control of new technologies. These areas are formidable challenges that the EU can only aim to shape if it recovers internal unity and cohesion.

1. On trade, the EU can try to act as a mediator between China and the US at the dawn of a new trade war. The EU has substantial expertise in international trade and smart diplomats with good reputations in multilateral forums even without the United Kingdom, which is expected to maintain close collaboration with the EU, including in multilateral forums like the UN and the WTO.

2. Human rights are trickier. The EU can count on medium-sized powers like Japan and Canada but it will not have the complicity of the great powers, or of other regional medium-sized powers (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Venezuela, for example).

3. However, it is in the area of migration where the EU's possibilities of shaping the discourse, policies and potential solutions in multilateral forums went sour; especially because of the lack of unity following the Global Compact for Migration and the polarised and politicised positions of different member states in this debate.

4. Finally, artificial intelligence (AI) and new technologies is a field where the EU can still set the rules and shape the agenda, offering an alternative to the US and China's opposed perspectives. According to Gowan and Dworkin (2019), this alternative could be to enforce "values-based principles for the responsible stewardship of trustworthy AI"; to act as a regulatory superpower and a big potential market and investment powerhouse and provide an ethical approach to the regulation of AI when it comes to data management and data privacy; and, finally, to use the UN's multilateral forum to assist countries suffering from "cyber-colonisation" (Pauwels, 2019).

WE MUST REMIND OURSELVES THAT, IN THE WORDS OF SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD, "THE UN WAS NOT CREATED TO BRING US TO HEAVEN, BUT TO SAVE US FROM HELL". THE DUTCH JOURNALIST GEERT MAK ADDED THAT THIS STATEMENT ALSO APPLIED TO THE EU. DAVID SHEARER, LONG-TIME SENIOR UN OFFICIAL AND FORMER MEMBER OF THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT MADE A REMARK THAT IS VALID FOR BOTH: "IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE UN YOU'D HAVE TO INVENT IT".

Conclusion

A multilateral world is the world the UN and the EU strive for. It is a world governed by rules, where decisions are adopted after deliberation and never unilaterally. However, facing Brexit and the weakening of the transatlantic link, old allies have become doubtful friends, if not competitors. Transnational cooperation must therefore be placed at the heart of their actions. It is time that the UN was reformed, not only in the representation of the UNSC but also in the way it works internally. Making the UNSC transparent and accountable to the UNGA is key and the EU must do its part to secure these goals.

Regarding reform of the UNSC, the EU should adopt a common position, either on the inclusion of Germany as a permanent member or the reforms advocated by Italy and Spain. Ideally, if the EU can speak with one voice in

the UNGA, the logical next step would be to give it a seat on the UNSC. Leaving aside the debate over whether France should vacate its seat in favour of a permanent EU one, the already-strong cooperation in the UNSC between permanent and non-permanent EU member states could be strengthened. The EU will be taken seriously as a geopolitical power and global actor if it works to strengthen cohesion, which is nowadays far from optimal.

We must remind ourselves that, in the words of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, "the UN was not created to bring us to heaven, but to save us from hell". The Dutch journalist Geert Mak added that this statement also applied to the EU. David Shearer, long-time senior UN official and former member of the New Zealand parliament made a remark that is valid for both: "if you didn't have the UN you'd have to invent it".

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BETWEEN REALISM AND FAIRNESS:
REFLECTION TO HELP THE UNITED NATIONS FACE THE GLOBAL MIGRATION CHALLENGE

For the 75th anniversary of the United Nations in 2020, the Secretary-General and former long-term High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, has called for proposals on the "kind of future [that] we want to create" and on the ways "to bridge the gap" between that future and the current world (UN, 2020). This article will address this long-term question for the case of migration. After describing today's unprecedented level of coercive restrictions against migrants from less developed countries and what common principles of justice would propose, this article will present a few intermediary actions that the UN could consider.

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The current migratory situation

Migration flows stem from the inequality of opportunities between countries (Cavallero, 2006). Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, global inequality – understood as the asymmetrical distribution of income and wealth among individuals worldwide – mostly paralleled inequality levels within countries. Since then, inequality between countries has accounted for most of global inequality. Over the last half century, the world's Gini coefficient – a measure of inequality between 0 and 1, where 0 is perfect equality – has averaged 0.7, with only a slight reduction recently, whereas even the most unequal countries have had Gini coefficients below 0.6 (Bourguignon and Morrisson, 2002: 727–34; Milanović, 2013: 201).

International variations in income levels mirror the international hierarchy. The United States is the only large country with a GDP per capita at purchasing power parity above $65,000 (IMF, 2019). Other countries at this level are small and mostly distributed in western Europe and the Persian Gulf – two US-allied regions. Between $40,000 and $60,000 lie the other countries in those two regions and North America, along with the other US allies

in East Asia and Oceania: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand. A few countries at the periphery of this US-centred group of rich countries – mostly new members of the European Union in central Europe – have climbed above $30,000. Above $20,000 are only the other countries north of the line along the Turkish and Mexican southern borders, as well as Argentina and Chile. China is below $20,000, and India is under $8,500. The majority of African countries are below $5,000 – with 13 below $2,000. This hierarchy has barely changed in half a century. With a Pakistani worker likely to increase their income six-fold by simply moving to the United States (Rodrik, 2017: 6), it is unsurprising that global survey data show that nearly 750 million – 15% of the world's adults – would be prepared to emigrate (Esipova, Pugliese et al., 2020). Half would like to move to the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Australia, Saudi Arabia or the United Kingdom. The collapse in transportation and information costs since the 1950s should have allowed most would-be migrants to fulfil their plans (Chiswick and Hatton, 2003: 74).

THE PROPORTION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS WORLDWIDE HAS ONLY RISEN FROM 2.4% IN 1960 TO 3.4% IN 2019 AND WILL BE MUCH LOWER IN 2020.

Yet, immigration has caused great alarm in rich countries. Local workers without qualifications believe immigrants looking for low-skilled jobs can reduce their wages in freely adjusting labour markets (Ruhs, 2013: 62; Comte, 2018b; Comte, 2019), which economic research has corroborated (Borjas, 2003; Borjas and Monras, 2017). Organised labour interests in rich countries have dwarfed business interests in the definition of immigration policy and labour market policy (Comte, 2018b). They have supported closed borders (Marino, Roosblad et al., 2017: 124–5: 354) and high employment standards, sometimes in the range of a dozen times the wages in immigrants' origin countries. Those high standards have impeded immigrants who do make it to rich countries from finding regular low-skilled jobs – creating a range of social and security problems around those immigrants.

Under those conditions, rich countries have turned to a drastic selection against low-skilled immigration. In 1964, the United States stopped programmes of low-skilled immigration. In 1972, Australia turned to a point-based system to select high-skilled immigrants, and further strengthened it in the 1990s (Ruhs, 2013: 95). Swedish trade unions have screened all work permit applications by non-EU nationals (Ruhs, 2013: 100). British immigration policy has relied on a three-tier system, in which the lowest tier for low-skilled immigrants has been closed to non-EU nationals since 2004 (Ruhs, 2013: 92–3). Singaporean authorities have charged employers in the construction sector

a levy three times higher for unskilled than for skilled immigrants (Ruhs, 2013: 61–2). As work immigration opportunities faded away, rich countries have also narrowed their interpretation of asylum law. In 2008, Western countries recognised refugee status for 15.8% of applicants, against a recognition rate of 35.9% elsewhere (Hollifield, Martin et al., 2014: 43). Restricting immigration has required an unprecedented coercive apparatus to be set-up at the rich world's borders. Western countries deported 460,000 immigrants in 2000 and 660,000 in 2009 (Hollifield, Martin et al., 2014: 41). In 2012, 471 migrants died trying to cross the southwest section of the US border. In 2015, 3,770 died in the Mediterranean Sea during their irregular journey to Europe (Squire, 2017: 514). In Singapore, female low-skilled immigrant workers receive regular health checks and are sent home to give birth if they are found to be pregnant (*The Economist*, 2019). The 2020 Global Pandemic has further strengthened state control of international mobility.

Despite the expectation that falling transportation and information costs and the unprecedently large inequality between countries would multiply the number of migrants, the proportion of international migrants worldwide has only risen from 2.4% in 1960 to 3.4% in 2019 (World Bank, 2019; UN, 2019) and will be much lower in 2020. Net immigration to the United States has steadily declined over the last twenty years. By preventing migrants from moving to rich countries, restrictions have encouraged migration flows within poor regions such as Africa. In accordance with selective policies, those who move to rich countries are wealthier or more educated than other migrants. They also send the bulk of remittances to their countries of origin: 75% of the remittances sent by emigrants from Latin American countries come from the United States, while less than 15% flow between Latin American countries (Germano, 2018: 75, 79, 119). Against this backdrop, let us now try to answer the question asked by the Secretary-General.

RAWLS FOUND THAT THE INDIVIDUALS IN HIS "INITIAL SITUATION" WOULD RECOGNISE THAT "AN INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY" CAN BE JUSTIFIED ONLY IF IT "ENHANCE[S] THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THOSE WITH THE LESSER OPPORTUNITY".

"What kind of future do we want to create?"

The point of this exercise – which differs from defining policy recommendations – is to set up a reference framework rather than a road map. What would a global migration regime consistently organised around a sound theory of justice look like? The most appropriate theory of justice for thinking about migration remains the theory of justice as fairness articulated

by John Rawls (Rawls, 1999; for more recent approaches applying Rawls' insights to migration see Risse, 2012: Chapter 8; Albin, 2014). Rawls imagined what he called an "initial situation" in which free and rational individuals design some form of social organisation. These individuals have complete general information on social and economic mechanisms but lack specific details about their own place in society, natural abilities and fortune. On the one hand, they know that, for now and the decades to come, 90% of the global population live in less developed countries and only 10% in more developed countries. They also know that high employment standards hinder immigrants from poor countries from finding regular jobs in rich countries. On the other hand, behind what Rawls called the "veil of ignorance", they are

RAWLS' THEORY OF JUSTICE WOULD THEREFORE ENTAIL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FROM POOR TO RICH COUNTRIES AND COMPLETE ACCESS FOR IMMIGRANTS TO EMPLOYMENT IN RICH COUNTRIES.

unaware of the social position into which they will be born: the country, social class, gender or geographical area. They are likewise ignorant of the natural abilities they will possess or the level of luck they will enjoy over their lifetime. What kind of rules would those individuals construct for the global migration system?

Rawls found that the individuals in his "initial situation" would recognise that "an inequality of opportunity" can be justified only if it "enhance[s] the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity" (Rawls, 1999: 266). The inequality of opportunities that closed borders create for instance between a young girl in the United States and a similar girl in South Sudan does not enhance the opportunities of the latter (on misery and lack of opportunities in the Global South, see also Bargués in this volume). Rational individuals behind Rawls' "veil of ignorance" could not accept a social organisation in which they would have a 90% chance of being born in the poor world with very few options to escape. Rawls' theory of justice would therefore entail freedom of movement from poor to rich countries and complete access for immigrants to employment in rich countries. A liberal migration regime worldwide, underpinned by freely adjusting labour markets, would undermine the highly concentrated premium for being born in a rich country.

Besides the free movement of people, a second feature of a global migration regime consistent with a sound theory of justice entails the opportunity for immigrant workers from poor countries to transfer their earnings to their countries of origin. Remittances are powerful instruments to foster economic development and political stability in countries of origin (on development, see also Ayuso in this volume). In 2014, remittances sent by

international migrants to less developed countries represented 3.3 times the amount that rich countries gave in development aid (Germano, 2018: 4–5). Remittances are also superior to foreign investment because they are countercyclical. When a country falls into a downturn, the flow of foreign investment tends to dry up, whereas remittances increase as working emigrants are sensitive to the difficulties of their families. Remittances allow those families to maintain their consumption levels in unfavourable economic conditions and, thereby, to more easily decide on long-term investments in housing and education (*The Economist*, 2019; Germano, 2018: 10). A complete system for transferring earnings would therefore be a major instrument that would enhance the opportunities of those with lesser opportunities.

A third feature to consider – however behind the previous two – would be to improve living conditions for all while letting migration flows contribute to the harmonisation of income levels worldwide. The global migration system should preferably be organised in a way that prevents local workers in destination countries from experiencing a drop in their opportunities as a result of immigration. Yet this concern cannot justify restrictions on immigration. While a number of those who have highlighted downward pressure of immigration on local workers' wages have concluded that destination countries should restrict immigration, they

THE GLOBAL MIGRATION SYSTEM SHOULD PREFERABLY BE ORGANISED IN A WAY THAT PREVENTS LOCAL WORKERS IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES FROM EXPERIENCING A DROP IN THEIR OPPORTUNITIES AS A RESULT OF IMMIGRATION.

have not done so based on a convincing theory of justice. Rawls' theory of justice forbids restricting the opportunities of the worse-off to protect the earnings of the better-off (Albin, 2014: 145). Acceptable mechanisms to prevent local workers in destination countries from experiencing a reduction in their opportunities as a result of immigration would include free access to vocational training or to further education. This would expand local workers' opportunities when they are negatively affected by immigration. A social policy of this kind could be funded by taxing those in rich countries whose income is positively correlated to that of immigrants (Rawls, 1999: 292). To sum up, a global migration regime based on a consistent theory of justice would include freedom of movement between countries, freedom for workers from poor countries to take up employment in rich countries in freely adjusting labour markets, a complete system for transferring earnings, and taxation of the better-off in rich countries to fund vocational training and further education for local workers whose income is negatively affected by immigration.

"What action is needed to bridge the gap between the two worlds?"

Secretary-General António Guterres asks what the United Nations can do to bridge the gap between the current world and a world that would be based on a consistent theory of justice. The distribution of interests and power makes it impossible for UN actions to bridge the gap. Previous UN attempts have been few in number and have failed. Trying to get more ratification or better compliance with existing instruments would exacerbate tensions and prove counterproductive (Ruhs, 2013: 13–21). The recent global compact on migration boils down for all purposes to a non-binding ratification of current practices. Even this insignificant step of codification was rejected by the United States, Australia and several European countries processing the inflows of migrants from outside Europe. Even destination countries in South–South flows – including Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic and Israel – have withdrawn. So is any kind of substantial actions conceivable?

Looking at a rare instance of migratory liberalisation – inside the European Union – highlights the importance of a "regional hegemon" (Comte, 2018a). Germany has played this role in the liberalisation of migration flows inside Europe. Thanks to the relatively freely adjusting labour market in Germany and good economic conditions, the country has for most decades in the history of this transformation absorbed the bulk of the additional inflow of migrants created by liberal arrangements. Germany has conducted this policy not because it would have been necessary to get manpower, but in order to unify Europe in a liberal form. It is therefore possible to conceptualise "migratory hegemons" as regional powers with freely adjusting labour markets characterised by expanding demand that are interested in stabilising their regional environments.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INTERESTS AND POWER MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR UN ACTIONS TO BRIDGE THE GAP.

New cases may emerge (Comte, 2012). In the late 1940s, US incentives fostered regional cooperation in western Europe, initiating the first steps in the formation of today's migration regime in Europe. In a similar vein, the UN could launch a new programme to bring together regional groups of countries to liberalise trade, capital flows, and migration (on regional cooperation, see also Soler in this volume). The UN could secure the support of the United States and its allies to provide financial stimulus by underlining how such cooperation could alleviate the global migration predicament. UN agencies – such as the International Labour Office – could offer technical assistance. How should these regional groupings around possible migratory hegemons be defined?

Recent moves of US withdrawal from the Middle East may create an acute sense of geostrategic vulnerability for Saudi Arabia and other rich countries in the Gulf. Western pressure could lead them to create a more cohesive regional order – both in the context of their struggle with Iran and to prevent aggression from other Arab countries. Another possible hegemon in a more distant future is China. With China's expected population decline and geopolitical interest in relaxing tensions with its neighbours, Chinese leaders may consider deeper regional cooperation with Southeast Asian nations as a way to loosen the lock that encloses their country. The United States may accept this plan if China conducts itself as a benevolent and liberalising hegemon. Windows of opportunity may open to foster other smaller-scale regional hegemons elsewhere.

If the UN manages to promote such regional cooperation, it could deepen it by encouraging the export of social security benefits for internal migrants. This too would replicate the experience inside the European Union. Workers are normally entitled to benefits for themselves and their families, as they have contributed with their wages to social security institutions in their countries of employment. However, most countries restrict the payment of benefits to residents. As those benefits constitute considerable amounts, transferring them would create an enhanced system of remittances, which would likely foster development and reduce migration (Comte, 2018a). The transfers of healthcare benefits and family allowances could improve healthcare conditions and schooling opportunities in countries of origin and reduce the incentives for family members to relocate. The transfers of pensions and unemployment benefits could facilitate the return of emigrants. At the International Labour Office, there is the expertise to help regional groups of countries set up schemes for the transfer of benefits.

IF THE UN MANAGES TO PROMOTE SUCH REGIONAL COOPERATION, IT COULD DEEPEN IT BY ENCOURAGING THE EXPORT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR INTERNAL MIGRANTS.

Besides fostering the development of relevant regional frameworks and deepening their cooperation, the main role the UN could play is to promote better research outputs, which would be likely to give a stronger voice to the forces in favour of free migration. More research could better describe the mechanisms that are responsible for rich countries' deep closure to immigration from the poor world. Our knowledge of the evolution of the stances of trade unions in rich countries on immigration still contains several gaps: in some cases unions have stopped voic-

ing an official opposition to immigration, but we still know little about the alternative mechanisms they have developed to prevent immigration from exerting downward pressure on local workers' wages (Penninx and Roosblad, 2000). Alongside historical research, philosophical research can also highlight the importance for global fairness of free and competitive labour markets. The dominant opinion in rich countries is that labour markets need to have high standards, whereas Rawls' theory of justice as fairness operates under freely adjusting labour markets, in which only the marginal productivity of labour determines wages (Rawls, 1999: 269). There is therefore room for the UN to promote new research to highlight debates on migration – one of the key challenges of the twenty-first century.

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CULTURE:
A PATH TOWARDS
A MORE
SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE?

How does culture matter to the United Nations in the twenty-first century? What is its role in creating a more sustainable future, strengthening the UN system and renewing the collective commitment to multilateralism? To equip the UN to better tackle the global challenges laid out in the 2030 Agenda and improve its integration, Secretary-General António Guterres has launched reforms in three areas: Peace and Security, Development, and Management. Culture is barely mentioned in the reform plans, but it can contribute to effective innovations in all these areas. The epochal transformations we face today call for renewed investment in UN programmes and policies in the areas of cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue, especially where they relate to the UN's peace and sustainable development agendas.

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Peace: Managing cultural diversity in a globally interconnected world

The contribution of cultural policies and programmes to UN peacebuilding has gained new relevance since Secretary-General Guterres re-established the pursuit of peace as the organisation's primary objective. This particularly applies to the current reform of the UN peace and security pillar, which places preventive diplomacy and action at the forefront of peacebuilding. To overcome the narrow focus of peacebuilding on post-conflict intervention, a new guiding concept of "sustaining peace" was adopted in 2016 that deepens and widens the UN peace agenda to take in prevention, root causes, mediation, reconciliation, reconstruction and development (Resolution 70/262). This multifaceted approach creates stronger linkages between peace, sustainable development and human rights, and fosters new partnerships across the peace efforts of different UN entities and offices (see Bargués in this volume).

The reframing of the scope and methodology of UN peacebuilding and emphasis on prevention have created multiple entry points for culture. Seen from a longer-term perspective the holistic vision of sustaining peace strongly resonates with the earlier notion of a "culture of peace" introduced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1989, which addresses the deep roots of conflict by building on UNESCO's foundational commitment to nurture people's defences of peace through transformative education, science and culture. The culture of peace approach gained ground within the broader UN system from the late 1990s onwards through the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000) and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence (2001–2010). Defined as a "set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations" (Resolutions 52/13), the culture of peace places intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity at the core of peacebuilding, alongside the imperatives of human rights, democratic participation and sustainable development. In today's globally interconnected world a culturally sensitive approach of this sort is fundamental to sustaining peace.

THE RECENT UN SUSTAINING PEACE AGENDA HAS PAVED THE WAY FOR GREATER RECOGNITION OF CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE AREAS OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE (TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE).

The recent UN sustaining peace agenda has paved the way for greater recognition of contributions in the areas of intercultural dialogue and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible). Resolution 2347 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflict adopted by the Security Council in 2017 is one example, recognising UNESCO's efforts to protect cultural heritage as an integral part of international security and peacebuilding. Another initiative that stands out is "Revive the Spirit of Mosul",[1] the UNESCO flagship project launched in 2018 to contribute to Iraq's reconstruction and reconciliation between communities through rebuilding cultural heritage sites and revitalising educational and cultural institutions. Mosul, one of the world's oldest cities and a cultural melting pot, has been a site of militarised conflict since 2003, enduring occupation by the Islamic State/Daesh group and serving as its capital from 2014 to 2017. Years of war and extremist ter-

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1. https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/baghdad/revivemosul

rorism have left the city and its ancient cultural and religious heritage in ruins, and inflicted immense violence and trauma on the population. UNESCO's initiative is the first large-scale attempt to reconstruct and protect the city's heritage, empower its population and promote an inclusive and cohesive society.

However, initiatives like these remain the exception. There is still a long way to go until cultural actions and programmes are properly integrated into UN peacebuilding. Generally speaking, the contribution of culture to peace is still an underexplored and underfunded area within the UN. If the reform of the UN peace and security pillar aspires to be comprehensive it needs to address this interlinkage, particularly in the following two areas:

The first concerns the role of cultural actions and strategies in resolving specific localised conflicts and conflict risks. The twenty-first century has seen a proliferation of conflicts driven by ethnic, religious and cultural discourses, ranging from intellectual "culture wars" to ethnic cleansing, as well as other non-traditional threats motivated by identity politics (see Bourekba in this volume). These are particularly amendable to cultural interventions that aim to provide foundations for local dialogue and improved institutions and group relations. Examples and recommendations can be found in the UNESCO report *The Long Walk of Peace: Towards a Culture of Prevention* (2018), which analyses the organisation's work in the area of education and culture in the context of

ANOTHER IMPORTANT AREA IN WHICH INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO UN PEACEBUILDING IS AT THE MACRO-LEVEL OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE FOR PEACE.

the broader sustaining peace agenda. An area of particular relevance for local conflict resolution highlighted by the report is how UNESCO's culture of peace approach can contribute to fostering broad local ownership of peace, that is, within national governments and institutions, as well as in civil society. Educational and creative methodologies for cultural capacity building and dialogue can help engage stakeholders from across different social and political groups, identifying and mediating between their diverging needs, values, identities and cultural imperatives. Cultural methodologies like these are fundamental to creating long-term, sustainable peace by engaging the different sectors and groups in a society. They should be made an integral part of UN preventive diplomacy efforts.

Another important area in which intercultural dialogue can contribute to UN peacebuilding is at the macro-level of global governance for peace. As the planned revisions to the UN security pillar stress, one of the major challeng-

es to sustaining peace in today's world are the growing geopolitical divisions that prevent the settlement of disputes and wars (UN, 2020). These divisions no longer run merely along the well-known fault lines of the "West versus the rest" and "Global North versus Global South". They now include numerous divergences between states along identity lines (religious, cultural and ethnic) that are fuelled by isolationist and populist discourses that consider that global trade and citizenship are incompatible with national identities and undermine democratic values. The result is a decline in countries' commitment to strategic cooperation and a rules-based global order. In his address to the General Assembly on September 25th 2018, Guterres described the situation as "a bad case of trust deficit disorder" that poses a severe challenge to our collective ability to manage risk.

IF THE FUTURE ENVISIONED IN THE AGENDA 2030 IS TO BECOME A REALITY, CULTURE NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN MORE GENERAL SUSTAINABILITY MODELS WHOSE CONCERNS ARE PRIMARILY ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL.

Renewed investment in curated, systematic intercultural dialogue between representatives of states within the UN could contribute to reducing deficits in trust and improve relations between states. The final two years of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022)[2] could be used as a platform to openly address the issue and promote a culture of dialogue and multilateral collaboration. While similar efforts were made with the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) and the creation of the Alliance of Civilizations (2005), these focused on older fault lines, such as the cultural-religious differences between the West and Islam. Today, we need to reflect and tackle more complex divisions that sit at the intersection of culture and politics and challenge the very foundations of multilateralism.

Development: Fostering cultures of transformation

The UN has been at the forefront of debates and policies linking culture and development since the 1980s (Arzipe, 2019). Confronted with the inconsistencies and failures of many economic development programmes, UN entities such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were among the first international organisations to give greater importance to cultural variables in development planning. At the same time, UNESCO in-

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2. https://en.unesco.org/internationaldecaderapprochementofcultures

vested heavily in linking cultural policy with emerging theories of human and sustainable development through initiatives such as the World Decade for Culture and Development (1987–1997) and the creation of the World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) in 1992. These efforts culminated in the publication of the WCCD report *Our Creative Diversity* (1995), which initiated a worldwide conversation on culture and development that led other UN agencies and international actors such as the World Bank and the Global Economic Forum at Davos to take up the issue.

Since the turn of the century, culture's role as an enabler and driver of sustainable socioeconomic development has become widely accepted within the UN. However, a number of UNESCO reports aside, there has been little follow-up on the UN's innovative work on the subject in the 1990s. On the contrary, disengagement from culture is evident within the UN's major development policies (on the latter see Ayuso in this volume). The Millennium Development Goals paid no attention to the cultural dimension of development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) similarly make only weak references to culture with few policy consequences. In

LOCALLY DRIVEN INITIATIVES HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN OPERATIONALISING CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

the run-up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, a global multi-stakeholder campaign provided ample research demonstrating the importance of culture in development processes, but UN member states nevertheless decided against including a specific "Culture Goal". Overall, the future of culture in the SDG context over the next decade looks meagre. With only one culture-specific target (SDG 11.4 on safeguarding cultural heritage) few operational programmes will earmark funding for cultural projects and actions. What is more, the transversal mentions of culture in some goals (on education, economic growth, consumption and production, and sustainable cities) provide few incentives for decisive action, as the wording is often vague on how exactly culture can contribute to attaining these goals.

If the future envisioned in the Agenda 2030 is to become a reality, culture needs to be included in more general sustainability models whose concerns are primarily environmental, economic and social (Duxbury et al., 2017). Most environmental and socioeconomic challenges the world faces today have cultural values and practices at their root. The weak position of culture in UN sustainable development policies has prompted multiple civil society initiatives and other actors to conceptualise and operationalise a place for culture in sustainability. The reform of the UN development pillar should engage with and learn from these initiatives.

An important example of a promising approach to conceptualising the inter-relationship between culture and sustainable development is the much-cit-ed European Union-funded COST Action, Investigating Cultural Sustainability (2011–2015) (Dessin et al., 2015). A particular shortcoming addressed by this initiative is the long-running tension between two competing understand-ings of culture: the humanistic concept of culture as artistic expression and heritage, and the anthropological concept of culture as a distinctive way of life of a people or society. Confusion between the two understandings has hindered the integration of culture into development policy and planning. By defining three separate approaches to the culture-sustainability nexus, the COST Action has brought some clarity into the debate and facilitated the incorporation of culture into development policymaking. It distinguishes between (1) "cul-ture *in* sustainability", which views culture in the humanistic sense as an autonomous fourth dimension of sustainable development and fo-cuses on the contribution of artistic or cultural activity to sustainability pathways; (2) "culture *for* sustainability", which stresses the mediating role of culture in the broad humanistic sense (in-cluding the culture industries) as a way to drive and enable ecological and socioeconomic sus-tainability; and (3) "culture *as* sustainability," which suggests that culture in the anthropological sense, as the values and ideals by which a society envisions its future, encompasses all other dimensions of sustainability and is the key to achieving a developmental paradigm change (this last notion is in line with the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen (2004), which views culture as con-stitutive for development, rather than just a means towards an end). Since its publication, this tripartite model has gradually found its way into cultural and development policymaking in the EU, where it has helped to better frame and communicate the contribution of cultural actions. The UN is also likely to benefit from this conceptual framework for its policies.

BEST PRACTICES IN CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT GENERATED BY UNESCO COULD BE CAPITALISED ON AND TRANSFERRED TO OTHER UN ENTITIES.

Another example is the range of locally driven initiatives that have made prog-ress in operationalising culture in sustainable development planning. Cities and their local governments have moved to the forefront of these efforts (UN-ESCO, 2016). The Culture Committee of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide network of local and regional governments, has be-come the principal advocate for culture as the fourth dimension of sustain-able development and as an enabler of sustainability in other sectors. As a complement to the UN Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development of 1992, it launched the "Agenda 21 for Culture" in 2004 and the follow-up document "Culture21: Actions" in 2015, after the failed campaign to include a culture

goal in the 2030 Agenda. Numerous member cities of UCLG have put in place transversal strategies and policies to implement the Agenda 21 for Culture. The UN can learn a great deal from the experiences and outcomes of these local pilot projects, especially from efforts to localise the SDGs through cultural policies and the creation of culture-related indicators.

At the same time more can be done. For instance, in the face of the climate crisis, the notion of "culture *as* sustainability" remains an underexploited concept that could benefit from investment. Again, UNESCO is one of the few international organisations working in this direction, in this case under the motto "Changing minds, not the climate". But thus far, UNESCO's culture-related climate actions and programmes focus largely on heritage safeguarding. Much could be gained from integrating artistic and cultural activities into the organisation's educational programmes and public awareness-raising about climate change. Art could powerfully illuminate the issue and transform attitudes, behaviours and practices in relation to it (on the need for climate policies to foster behavioural change, see Vandendriessche in this volume). Similarly, creative practices can support our coming to terms with the "new normality" that COVID-19 has brought about by reimagining our future lives in ways that respond to the new sanitary requirements but also capitalise on the opportunity for social innovation.

THE UN'S TRANSITION TOWARDS MORE HOLISTIC PUBLIC POLICY, THROUGH THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY, SHOULD LEAD THE ORGANISATION TO RECOGNISE THAT CULTURE REACHES BEYOND THE NARROWLY DEFINED FIELD OF CULTURAL POLICY.

Management: Towards a more inclusive UN

The UN2020 initiative, a growing civil society network, has campaigned for the UN's 75th anniversary to be used as an opportunity to make the organisation more inclusive and people-centred. This objective also forms part of Guterres' reform plans in the Management rubric. Culture has been surprisingly absent from both official UN debates and those in civil society on reforms to make the UN more inclusive of civil society. But cultural policies and programmes can be effective vehicles to open up the UN.

UN cultural policies are among the organisation's most successful and best-known. The 1972 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is the most widely adopted convention in the history of the UN. The 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage generated so much enthusiasm that it be-

came the most rapidly ratified international convention. The popularity of these and other culture-related UN conventions and policies have also assisted in their ambitious goals for engaging civil society. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention prescribes that safeguarding must proceed with the permission, cooperation and substantive decision-making involvement of the relevant communities and practitioners. Similarly, the latest UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) formally recognises engagement with civil society as essential to its implementation. Best practices in civil society engagement generated by UNESCO could be capitalised on and transferred to other UN entities.

However, UNESCO itself should also try to set new standards of openness and engagement. In particular, it should try to change the way cultural diplomacy is currently conducted within and through the organisation. At present UNESCO remains a space primarily for traditional multilateral cultural diplomacy between states. It thereby upholds the primacy of states in international cultural relations and reinforces the unified or static notions of "national culture" that states mobilise in their pursuit of soft power (Figueira, 2015). This mode of operating is fundamentally at odds with the values of cultural diversity and cultural rights the organisation promotes. But its more serious failing is that it ignores the reality of contemporary international cultural relations, in which a diverse array of actors outside of central governments – from independent cultural organisations and actors to local authorities – are the real movers and shakers. UNESCO needs to open up to these actors by initiating a paradigm shift in how it defines and practices cultural diplomacy. Again, cultural policy in the EU might serve as a model for such reforms. In 2016, the EU adopted a new joined strategy of European international cultural relations that moves beyond traditional understandings of cultural diplomacy as national soft power and towards a more bottom-up approach that seeks to limit government involvement in favour of people-to-people cooperation (Isar, 2015). While the EU is itself struggling with the implementation of this ambitious strategy, UNESCO should closely follow its failures and successes.

Conclusion

Culture is at the heart of many of today's epochal transformations and disruptions. Yet, it is often ignored as both cause and solution. The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us of the importance of culture and creativity for society. During lockdown, digital access to cultural content and performances allowed for social participation and contributed to peoples' mental health and well-being. In the restart and recovery phase, investment in cultural

practices, institutions and industries will be key to rebuilding social cohesion and accelerating economic recovery, especially in large cities with substantial culture and tourism industries.

In UNESCO the UN has a designated agency for cultural matters, but there continues to be a need to make the case for culture within the broader UN system. The UN's transition towards more holistic public policy, through the all-encompassing concept of sustainability, should lead the organisation to recognise that culture reaches beyond the narrowly defined field of cultural policy; it should inform and be integrated into all environmental, economic and social policies. Above, I have suggested why and how culture should be more systematically included in the policy areas of peace and development. To facilitate a more transversal approach to culture across the three UN pillars, the organisation can also take some more general measures. Of particular importance would be the promotion of strategic partnerships between UNESCO and the UN's core peace, development and human rights agencies. Further, funding for the production of rigorous research and data on how cultural policies and programmes contribute to the UN's three pillars is sorely needed in order to facilitate informed policymaking, measure progress and promote broader engagements with culture.

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FURTHER INCLUDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE QUEST FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE UN

To what extent would better inclusion of local governments contribute towards reinforcing international cooperation and make the United Nations (UN) more effective? This chapter explores how the UN has historically engaged in dialogue with these actors and notes that they should be accorded different treatment within the UN system, which has traditionally considered them a civil society stakeholder. The UN has made some progress in the past few years, but there is still a long way to go. In today's urban era, local governments should take part in the global conversation about how to tackle the world's most daunting challenges. And they should do so in their capacity as representative institutions endowed with a political mandate. Only this way will the UN75 process really grasp the opportunity to make global governance more effective.

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The participation of non-state actors in the UN

One of the aims of the debates organised in 2020 to decide how to orient reform of the UN is to "make global cooperation more effective and inclusive".[1] The desire for greater inclusion seems to have been a concern of the organisation since it was first created in 1945. The following year, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) granted consultative status to 41 NGOs, aware that civil society would become a key partner for the organisation, contributing to a number of activities such as "information dissemination, awareness raising, development education, policy advocacy, joint operational projects, participation in intergovernmental processes and in the contribution of services and technical expertise" (UN, 2018). The same year ECOSOC adopted a resolution creating the

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1. See https://www.un.org/en/un75/faq.

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations as a permanent body in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA),[2] the main mission of which would be to manage every aspect related with consultative status (Resolution E/1996/31).[3] This opening up of the organisation attracted the interest of a number of non-state actors to the point that, at present, the UN has more than 5,000 observers. What is the profile of UN observers? Broadly speaking, they are non-governmental organisations, independently of their geographic reach (they can be international, regional, sub-regional or national), provided that their sphere of work is directly related with UN objectives. However, since these very early days, territorial governments and their networks, which are governmental institutions by nature, have also been granted this status. The first city network to obtain it was the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), which became a UN observer in 1947. As a consequence, the UN treated local governments like NGOs for decades.

In 1992, this dynamic slightly changed when the so-called Major Groups were established as the second key instrument within the UN system for fostering dialogue with non-state actors. Major Groups took shape after the first UN Conference on Environment and Development (popularly known as the Earth Summit) was held in Rio de Janeiro. The UN was convinced that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and invited nine categories of actors to join the conversation. Local governments were granted a differentiated group within the following categories, a decision that was much applauded by mayors and international city networks:

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD TAKE PART IN THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW TO TACKLE THE WORLD'S MOST DAUNTING CHALLENGES.

1. Women
2. Children and Youth
3. Indigenous Peoples
4. Non-Governmental Organisations
5. **Local Authorities**

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2. See https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/.

3. UNDESA has produced a database, the Integrated Civil Society Organization System (iCSO), which brings together all the information related to civil society organisations that have been granted consultative status. For more information, see https://esango.un.org/.

6. Workers and Trade Unions
7. Business and Industry
8. Scientific and Technological Community
9. Farmers.

At the next environment summit, known as Rio+20, the spectrum of actors invited to discuss sustainable development was even expanded to include local communities, foundations and volunteer groups, migrants and families, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Since 2013, philanthropic organisations, academic and educational entities and other actors working in areas related with sustainable development (A/RES/67/290) have been incorporated into these Major Groups as well (now called Major Groups and Other Stakeholders). This broad amalgam of non-state actors took part in the development and adoption in 2015 of the new agenda for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, which set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since then, non-state actors have been involved in implementation, advocacy, knowledge transfer and monitoring activities around the agenda. They have also played a key role in its follow-up and review process, which culminated with regular meetings of the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – HLPF (A/RES/67/290). For decades, local governments have invested significant effort and resources in all these stages. As a result of their advocacy, they managed to establish an urban goal, SDG 11, on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. After many years of international work, their voice began to be given greater consideration by the UN and its members.

THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ASKED UN-HABITAT TO REVIEW ITS WORKING METHODS IN ORDER TO OPEN THEM UP TO REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS.

The slow path towards greater inclusion of local authorities within the UN system

Although the involvement of sub-national governments in the UN has historically been channelled through the consultative status granted to NGOs, local authorities are different in nature to civil society entities. First because, as one of the three spheres of government that generally make up a state (national, regional and local), they are governmental institutions. And second, as governmental institutions, they are politically responsible for the territories they manage. This distinction underpinned the international municipalist movement that worked to get lo-

cal authorities involved in international politics from the 1980s onwards and laid the foundations for its streamlining into a single organisation, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Constructing a single voice for cities was seen to be the best strategy for achieving stronger political recognition from the UN, but the path towards this recognition has not been easy.

The first major milestone was the creation of the Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG).[4] This platform allowed local governments to engage in direct dialogue with the UN as a differentiated stakeholder and not as a group within civil society. One UN area has been particularly important to local governments gaining greater political recognition: the UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT). As its mission relates most directly to urban matters, transnationally organised local authorities have directed a considerable amount of their efforts to lobbying UN-HABITAT. One of the earliest results of their advocacy work took place in the framework of the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (1996), also known as HABITAT II. Under the auspices of this summit, international local government associations organised the first big meeting of international municipalism, the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities (WACLA), whose political messages calling for greater political recognition were eventually incorporated into the final document of HABITAT II. Known as the Istanbul Declaration, this document recognises local authorities as the "closest partners" of UN HABITAT and as being "essential, in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda".

IN UN-HABITAT'S GOVERNING COUNCIL THE STATUS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IS EQUAL TO THAT OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS.

Shortly after HABITAT II, the UN General Assembly asked UN-HABITAT to review its working methods in order to open them up to representatives of local authorities and their associations. There was a common understanding within the organisation that the active involvement of cities would contribute to making the implementation of the Habitat Agenda more effective (A/RES/51/177). As a result of this request, one of the ideas UN-HABITAT considered was to reproduce the tripartite model of the International Labour Organization (ILO), whose governing body consists of representatives of governments, enterprises and workers. Yet when the proposal was discussed during the 16th session of the Commission

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4. See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/localauthorities.

of Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT's governing body at that time), it was rejected. This opposition arose from the notion that, while in the ILO framework a tripartite configuration is the result of a distinction that is functional by nature, including local governments in UNHABITAT's governing bodies could be interpreted as a political statement suggesting that state governments were not properly representing their cities and towns (Salomón and Sánchez, 2008: 136). This decision thwarted the aspirations of the international municipal movement, which saw a window of opportunity being closed.

Instead of being granted a space in UN-HABITAT's governing body, local authorities were invited to participate in a consultative body to UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities – UNACLA, set up in the year 2000. Although the hopes for reproducing the ILO's tripartite model were higher, the establishment of UNACLA definitely contributed to better showcasing the role cities were playing in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. As a matter of fact, their contribution was applauded at Istanbul+5, the special session of the General Assembly organised with the aim of evaluating the progress made five years after the adoption of the document. In this framework, a mayor – Joan Clos, then mayor of Barcelona and President of UNACLA – was permitted to address a UN General Assembly for the first time in history (interestingly, Clos was to become Executive Director of UN-HABITAT in 2010).

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD TAKE PART IN THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW TO TACKLE THE WORLD'S MOST DAUNTING CHALLENGES.

The creation of UNACLA also paved the way for another milestone in local governments' efforts to be acknowledged as governmental actors. After Istanbul+5, the rules of procedure of UN-HABITAT's Governing Council were revised and observer status was granted to local governments (Rule 64), allowing them to participate in council debates without voting rights. Unlike the situation in the UN General Assembly, where local governments and NGOs have equal status, in UN-HABITAT's Governing Council the status of local governments is equal to that of governmental actors. Specifically, it is equal to states who are not members of UN-HABITAT (Rules 61–62) and to intergovernmental organisations (Rule 63). Governmental actors with observer status can participate in the deliberations of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council without the right to vote. By contrast, NGOs with observer status can make oral presentations but not participate in the deliberations (Rule 66).

This first big advance in terms of political recognition of local governments as governmental actors on a par with other public actors but not with civil society came in the recommendations of the Cardoso Report (A/58/817). This document was drawn up by the Panel of Eminent Persons, which was created in 2004 at the request of the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (A/57/387 and Corr. 1). The Cardoso Report highlighted how local authorities differed from civil society because of their representative character and recommended the UN General Assembly adopt a resolution affirming and recognising the principle of local autonomy (Proposal 17). In addition, the recent creation of UCLG (the largest transnational organisation of cities),[5] led the Panel of Eminent Persons to suggest that the UN should consider recognising this new municipalist network as an advisory body to the Secretary-General and to the General Assembly (Proposal 18).

However, neither of these two recommendations was implemented by the UN. In all likelihood, the members of this state-led organisation did not want their already-eroded sovereignty to be further undermined by the participation of other political actors. This is why the path towards political recognition of local governments in UN global governance has been so slow. Actually, it was not until 2015 (eleven years after the Cardoso Report) that another breakthrough was made regarding dialogue between the UN and sub-national governments. This occurred when the UN once again accorded differential treatment to local governments, this time in the consultation process linked to HABITAT III. Previously, if local authorities were able to participate in consultation processes, the scope of their participation was equal to that of NGOs. In HABITAT III, however, city governments were not only invited to participate in the consultation process (like NGOs), but also in the deliberations (like other governmental actors: A/RES/70/210, Rule 65). They did so through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, a coordination and consultation mechanism facilitated by UCLG that brings together the major international networks of local authorities.[6]

This historical account shows that the decade of the 2000s marks a before and after in terms of the political recognition of local governments within the UN. The reason for this change is probably the fact that the international municipalist movement was able to organise politically at the global level once UCLG was founded. As Salomón and Sánchez (2008: 134) state, "[…] the degree of presence in the UN system could not have been achieved

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5.   See www.uclg.org.

6.   See https://www.global-taskforce.org/.

if the unification of the worldwide municipal associations had not taken place. At the same time, the objective of having a single voice before the UN was the main catalyst of the unification process."

Even so, the UN could have gone further, not only by following the recommendations of the Cardoso Report but also by learning from how local authorities engage with other supranational organisations. For example, the European region (Papisca, 2011) has made significant political and legal advances in acknowledging the role of local and regional governments. Notable is the pioneering work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities created in 1957 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. This body has played a key role in promoting the adoption of several international regulations recognising and promoting the political role of local and regional governments (e.g. the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation of 1980, or the European Charter of Local Self-Government, 1985).

These developments paved the way for institutional regulations and arrangements that were later established by the European Union (EU), such as the creation of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in 1994, which is composed of locally and regionally elected representatives. It is also worth mentioning, as another example, the 2006 European Parliament and Council regulation on a "European grouping of territorial cooperation" (EC No. 1082/2006). This instrument legally enables political autonomy of local and regional authorities within an international framework (the EU system) and lays the groundwork for their active participation in several of the EU's high-level programmes, such as the Structural Funds, Interreg, the new Wider Europe - Neighbourhood policy, and Territorial Dialogue, among others.

Conclusions

If the UN75 process is serious about promoting greater effectiveness in global governance, the UN still has a long way to go. In an urban world like today's, cities and urban territories play a key role in matters of social cohesion, local democracy and ecological transition, to name just a few examples. It is therefore logical that their governments should take part in the global conversation about how to tackle the world's most daunting challenges. And they should do so in their capacity as representative institutions endowed with a clear political mandate.

From a strategic point of view, moreover, greater recognition of sub-national governments could be a way for the UN to gain greater functional

autonomy in an eroded supranational milieu, as the Cardoso Report points out (A/58/817: 7). Combining its intergovernmental nature with in-depth discussions with other actors – and, in the case that concerns us here, local governments – would allow increased efficiency in global cooperation, while also making it more inclusive and democratic.

In a global political context marked by interdependence and globalisation in which the sovereignty of the nation-state has proven insufficient for protecting democracy, it is necessary to reinforce the participative character of the UN and to allow actors with a representative mandate, like local and regional governments, to play a more prominent political role.

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(INTER) REGIONALISM:
SAVIOUR OF MULTILATERALISM OR ITS LAST REFUGE?

Are regional cooperation and interregional partnerships means of countering unilateral offensives at a global level or instruments that at best help preserve the multilateral spirit at a smaller scale? COVID-19 and its economic, social and geopolitical effects will test regional cooperation. Like the fight against climate change, it could either be fertile ground for interregional dialogue or a divisive issue within regional blocs and above all between them.

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This contribution attempts to assess the interplay between (inter)regionalism and multilateralism, evaluating the extent to which regional cooperation can help cope with global challenges by focusing on articulating multi-level alliances. It focuses on COVID-19 as an example. The fight against the pandemic may reinforce or weaken multilateralism depending on the outcome of this cooperation, globally and regionally. Secondly, it discusses whether interregional dialogues could provide platforms to bridge the gaps between the priorities and positions of different regional blocs and, eventually, become incubators of transformative global agendas. It will illustrate this potential by focusing on the fight against climate change and the wider sustainability agenda.

Before analysing these two cases, it is worth drawing the bigger picture so as to better understand how this chapter relates to the other contributions in this volume. Regional multilateralism has not been spared the attacks made on multilateralism at global level. Three decades ago, scholars debated whether regionalism would erode multilateralism, particularly when it came to trade. For instance, Jagdish Bhagwati wrote in 1992 that "only time will tell whether the revival of regionalism since the 1980s will have been a sanguine

and benign development or a malign force that will serve to undermine the widely-shared objective of multilateral free trade for all" (Bhagwati, 1992: 554). Nowadays, the debate is turning towards whether regionalism – as a specific form of multilateralism – is threated by unilateralism or a preference for transactional bilateralism.

In the last decade, several regional integration processes have suffered from the erosion of the very principles on which they were founded, mainly due to fragmentation and polarisation dynamics, the election or consolidation of uncooperative leaderships and a greater appetite for strictly bilateral relations (Sanahúja, 2019). Latin America was once studied as an incubator of regional platforms, but a number of authors have wondered whether regionalism in Latin America has reach its peak (Malamud and Gardini, 2012). Indeed, many regional organisations have gradually become hostage to sharp ideological divides across the continent and within individual countries (Nolte, 2019). The Arab world has also seen regional rivalries paralyse the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council (del Sarto & Soler i Lecha, 2018). In January 2020, the European Union for the first time experienced a member abandoning the project; but the United Kingdom's departure was the culmination of 15 years of overlapping crises since the failed referendums on the European constitution in France and the Netherlands. This has led some scholars to discuss the possibility of de-Europeanisation and disintegration (Jones, 2018; Rosamond, 2019). And yet, there are some exceptions to this trend: the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are becoming increasingly relevant political actors, and major progress has been made in intra-regional trade and cooperation in Africa. Similarly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been far less affected by centrifugal forces than its Arab and Latin American counterparts.

IN THE LAST DECADE, SEVERAL REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES HAVE SUFFERED FROM THE EROSION OF THE VERY PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THEY WERE FOUNDED.

The UN system sees regional bodies as a driving force for global multilateralism. Indeed, Chapter VIII of the UN charter says that regional organisations and arrangements are key to furthering peace and security. Similarly, regional organisations tend to be vocal supporters of multilateralism at a global scale. A good example is the EU's Global Strategy, which vowed to promote "a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core" (European Union, 2016). Yet, EU support may not be enough to keep multilateralism alive (for more see Sánchez in this volume). Is the EU its sole defender or is this a shared position for other

regional organisations? To what extent can cooperation initiatives by two or more regional blocs support multilateralism globally? Are regionalism and interregionalism means of countering unilateralism or just ways to preserve multilateralism at a smaller scale?

Regional cooperation and global challenges: the case of COVID-19

It is a commonplace to say that individual states are too small to cope alone with global challenges such as global warming and that only collective efforts will bear fruit. Up until 2020, most of the attention was focused on preventing climate change and mitigating its effects. Other mega-trends such as digitalisation and automation and their effects on taxation systems and the future of work have started to move up on the global agenda. Yet the health crisis and its huge social, economic and (geo)political consequences have captured the attention and temporarily overshadowed any other concern. Inevitably, regional cooperation frameworks will be gauged by their capacity to cope not only with the pandemic but, equally importantly, its effects.

Once more, this puts the EU on the spot. First and foremost, because it is the most advanced example of regional integration. Secondly, because COVID-19 is challenging many of the assumptions on which European integration is built, such as the limits imposed on the free movement of people. Last but not least, because Europe became one of the pandemic's main epicentres. High levels of regional integration in the form of intra-regional mobility and trade have contributed to the rapid spread of the pandemic in Europe. What now remains to be proven is that regional integration also helps better contain the spread of the virus and cope with its devastating effects. What that means is that the EU's capacity to articulate collective efforts in research and development (R+D) and, equally importantly, to provide support to territories or sectors that have suffered the most from the pandemic will send a message not just to its own citizens but to the rest of the world.

REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS WILL BE GAUGED BY THEIR CAPACITY TO COPE NOT ONLY WITH THE PANDEMIC BUT, EQUALLY IMPORTANTLY, ITS EFFECTS.

Yet, in these uncertain times, we should cast our eyes further than the European integration process. As I write, Latin America is one of the areas where COVID-19 is spreading most rapidly. And while a few years ago, Latin America was seen as an interesting hub for regional and subregional cooperation efforts, nowadays many of those platforms are paralysed as a result

of mutually reinforcing regional and domestic polarisation trends. This is aggravated by the deteriorating economic situation and the scant appetite of regional powers to invest their energies in revamping those regional cooperation frameworks. When facing COVID-19 and its consequences the two largest regional powers, Mexico and Brazil, have shown no inclination to seek regional solutions. More generally, Latin American countries seem to be pursuing uncoordinated responses to a common threat and have adopted very different strategies (Ayuso, 2020). In Mercosur, for instance, the social and economic effects of the pandemic have even accentuated the differences between Argentina – advocating protectionist measures – and Brazil – which wants to boost international trade agreements with other countries and regional blocs. At the same time, it is no less true that the crisis offers a new opportunity for Latin American regionalism to become not only relevant but also useful in areas such as the joint purchase of medical equipment (Bianculli, 2020) and uniting efforts to cope with the acute financial vulnerability of middle-income economies.

REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND LEADERS HAVE COME OUT TO DEFEND THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) FROM THE ATTACKS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DONALD TRUMP.

A third case worth examining is the African Union, precisely because, as mentioned above, in Africa regional cooperation has shown steady progress. When it comes to the pandemic, Africa is sometimes presented as vulnerable – because of precarious health systems – but it managed to contain the first shock, registering among the lowest rates of contagion and casualties (Puig, 2020). In fact, most African countries imposed severe lockdowns, set up emergency medical facilities and pan-African cooperation initiatives from the early stages of the pandemic (Medinilla et al., 2020). This is why Africa's response to COVID-19 has been characterised as "an island of internationalism" (Witt, 2020). This includes the active role of the African Union – at a political level – but also of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) at a technical one. In the same vein, whereas COVID-19 may delay the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the realisation of their hyper-dependence on China for basic protective equipment (face masks, gloves, etc.) and on other suppliers for more sophisticated equipment such as ventilators is pushing African economies to revisit their industrialisation plans with a regional focus. Some countries have already adapted to the new reality by transforming their factories to export medical equipment to African neighbours. The awareness of the economic and social costs for African countries – many of which are highly dependent upon commodities, tourism, remittances and international

cooperation – have also driven them to take action. For instance, several African countries are pushing collectively to ask for exceptional debt relief measures and have sought support in non-African capitals.

Finally, regional organisations and leaders have come out to defend the World Health Organization (WHO) from the attacks of the president of the United States of America, Donald Trump. The chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, called Trump's decision to suspend WHO funding "deeply regrettable", saying in a tweet on April 15th that "today more than ever, the world depends on WHO's leadership to steer the global Covid-19 pandemic response". The same day, via the same medium, EU High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell also lamented the US decision and said that "there is no reason justifying this move at a moment when their efforts are needed more than ever".

EVEN IF ALL REGIONAL BODIES AFFIRM THEIR COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE, THEIR INTERESTS, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES MAY DIVERGE.

In light of these developments, it is safe to argue that COVID-19 will act as some sort of "stress test" for regional organisations. It will also reveal how solid – and productive – the alliance is between multilateral institutions at different levels.

Interregional dialogues to bridge gaps and propose solutions: the case of climate change and the wider sustainability agenda

Before the spread of COVID-19 the fight against climate change was the global topic capturing everyone's attention (see Vandendriessche in this volume). Regional organisations have incorporated this challenge into their agendas and have set up regional-level plans and adopted measures to reduce global warming or mitigate its effects. As Juan Pablo Soriano explains (2019), interregional dialogues "progressively warned against the emergence of novel transnational and multidimensional security issues" – including climate change – and "an important discursive change took place during the 2010s, as transnational challenges were said to be threatening not only peoples and states, but also the global multilateral framework".

Regional cooperation has tended to align with UN-led efforts, in spite of opposition from some powerful states – particularly the US, which even decided to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Agreement. China's increased commitment to the climate change agenda has certainly favoured the alignment of regional organisations whose members are increasingly dependent on the country. Yet, even if all regional bodies affirm their commitment to addressing climate change, their interests, priorities and strategies may di-

verge. There is a marked difference between the EU – formed of developed and industrialised economies – and bodies from the Global South that represent emerging or developing economies. Although the two camps may agree that climate change is a priority, they often diverge about who should bear the costs of the policies to prevent it.

The fight against climate change could bring regional blocs closer together or it could turn out to be a divisive and contentious issue. Interregional relations between Europe and Latin America provide us with examples of both trends. On the positive side, it is worth mentioning EuroCLIMA+, a regional programme designed in 2008 that aims to generate common projects to preserve the environment. A less cooperative dynamic can be observed in the way the environment has impacted the negotiation of the EU–Mercosur trade agreement. Since October 2018, Brazil, the largest member of this Latin American bloc, has been led by Jair Bolsonaro, a climate change denier. The country's foreign affairs minister, Ernesto Araújo, even referred to climate change as a leftist conspiracy against the US and Brazil in a talk in Washington's Heritage Foundation in September 2019. This set Brazil on a collision course with the EU and its two largest members, France and Germany, which have stood out for their climate diplomacy. Thus, when the Amazon rainforest burned in summer 2019, relations between Brazil and some individual EU countries became strained, but so too did EU–Mercosur relations. Several countries and leaders – including France's Emmanuel Macron – announced that they would oppose the entry into force of the comprehensive trade agreement unless Bolsonaro changes his policies on deforestation.

WHEREAS EU–AFRICA COORDINATION ON GLOBAL CHALLENGES COULD BE KEY TO DEFINING AN AMBITIOUS INTERREGIONAL AGENDA, IT WILL NEED PRIOR TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL EFFORTS TO ALIGN POSITIONS.

Climate change and multilateralism also figure prominently on the EU–Africa agenda, as reflected recently in the European Strategy with Africa published in March 2020. The document says:

> The fight against climate change and environmental degradation is this generation's defining task. Therefore Europe and Africa are allies in the development of sustainable energy, transport solutions, farming, circular and blue economies which can underpin Africa's economic growth. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU and Africa alike need to opt for a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate-resilient future in line with the Paris Agreement (European Union, 2020).

This assumes that the two regional blocs see eye to eye on this challenge. Yet, a few weeks earlier, in February 2020, at the meeting between 25 European commissioners and their counterparts in the African Union in Addis Ababa, it became evident that some differences remain and that the African Union does not want a strategy to be forced on it from the outside (Marks, 2020). This is not a new development but rather a structural trend in EU–Africa relations, where "solutions are seen as imposed instead of owned" (Miyandazi et al., 2018). While EU leaders thought that they could bring Africa closer to their own transformational projects – the European Green Deal and the Digital Agenda – African interlocutors were reluctant. Some countries fear that the Green New Deal could become a new form of green protectionism; and as for the Digital Agenda, Africans want to avoid taking sides in the geopolitical competition between the EU and China. This example illustrates that whereas EU–Africa coordination on global challenges could be key to defining an ambitious interregional agenda, it will need prior technical and political efforts to align positions. What the EU leadership has begun to understand is the usefulness of resorting to previously agreed multilateral agreements such as the Paris Agreement.

PREVIOUSLY AGREED MULTILATERAL GOALS – THE 2030 AGENDA IS A CASE IN POINT – OFFERS A SAFER PLAYING FIELD FOR INTERREGIONAL EFFORTS.

Finally, another case worth looking at is Euro-Mediterranean cooperation where environmental issues have been part of the agenda for several decades. In fact, the first multilateral cooperation effort at Mediterranean scale concerned the environmental protection of maritime spaces. In 1975, 22 countries negotiated the Mediterranean Action Plan under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme and in 1976 they approved the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, the inception of the Barcelona Process coincided with the amendment of the Convention and the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995 recognised the importance of reconciling economic development with environmental protection, of integrating environmental concerns into the relevant aspects of economic policy and of mitigating the negative environmental consequences that might result. As time went by, environmental affairs became even more prominent – particularly under the project-based structure of the Union for the Mediterranean. More recent attempts to boost Euro-Mediterranean relations are putting the emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a common goal. Despite the fact that the members of this cooperation framework may have different positions and interests when it comes to issues such as de-carbonisation, environmental cooperation can still become a confidence-building measure, if only because on other topics such as democratisation or regional conflicts the differences are far larger.

What these examples show is that climate change is becoming increasingly present in the agenda of bi-regional dialogues, particularly when the EU is one of the two parties. Yet, the idea that these fora will provide a platform to join forces at global level cannot be taken for granted, as the EU's leading role may raise suspicions among weaker partners and also because at times of acute polarisation, the environment may be politically instrumentalised on the domestic or international front. To mitigate those risks, more intense cooperation is needed at technical and political levels and the common attachment to previously agreed multilateral goals – the 2030 Agenda is a case in point – offers a safer playing field for interregional efforts.

Conclusion

Unilateral impulses are not only a threat to the global rules-based order but also to regionalised forms of multilateralism such as the European Union and many other regional organisations around the world such as the AU, ASEAN, CELAC and the Arab League among many others. Preserving the internal cohesion of each of those regional blocs and articulating alliances with the UN system is a strategy worth exploring to preserve multilateralism at all levels but also to better cope with global challenges such as climate change and COVID-19. Similarly, interregional dialogues at a technical or political level contribute to keeping the multilateral flame alive. Likewise, the multilateral agenda at global level – of which the SDGs are the best example – provide a mutually agreed roadmap for those interregional dialogues, reducing the risk that the stronger of the two blocs imposes its agenda on the other. In the best circumstances, exploring those avenues could turn regionalism and interregionalism into a laboratory to generate new ideas to reenergise multilateralism at global scale. In the worst-case scenario, (inter)regionalism could become the last refuge for multilateral resistance.

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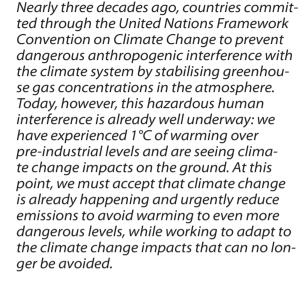
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IN 2020, THE WORLD PAUSED.
CLIMATE CHANGE DID NOT

Nearly three decades ago, countries committed through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system by stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Today, however, this hazardous human interference is already well underway: we have experienced 1°C of warming over pre-industrial levels and are seeing climate change impacts on the ground. At this point, we must accept that climate change is already happening and urgently reduce emissions to avoid warming to even more dangerous levels, while working to adapt to the climate change impacts that can no longer be avoided.

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Introduction

In the global governance of climate change, 2020 was intended to be a year of intensive work to shorten the distance between the current and desired trajectories in climate change mitigation. Concern about climate change was at a high point in many constituencies: school strikes for climate action were widespread, Oxford Dictionaries chose "climate emergency" as the word of the year, and in the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2020*, issues related to global warming occupied all five top positions in the most likely risks for the coming decade. Announcements of new climate mitigation targets and actions by states, regional organisations and companies were starting to emerge: Chile declared its intention to go carbon neutral in June 2019, the new European Commission announced the European Green Deal and its goal of climate neutrality by 2050, and Microsoft launched plans to be carbon negative by 2030.

However, this year has not gone according to plan. COP26, the major UN climate summit scheduled for November 2020 in Glasgow, has been post-

poned. Governments, individuals and indeed the entire world have had to shift their attention to a problem requiring urgent, immediate and full dedication: the COVID-19 pandemic engulfing the globe. In the short term, the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic has made an unintentional contribution to the fight against climate change**.** To prevent the virus's spread, large swathes of the world's economy were effectively shut down, which led local air pollution levels and energy-related greenhouse gas emissions to drop. However, this effect is likely to be only temporary – when the economy revs up again, so will emissions. More relevant, perhaps, are the lessons that the responses to the COVID-19 crisis might yield for climate action, particularly those related to individual behaviour and collective action.

There are a number of important similarities between the climate crisis and the COVID-19 crisis. First and foremost, they are clear examples of collective action problems. Both problems affect all of humankind – though some individuals and states may be more resilient and better equipped to deal with their impacts. In addition, both carbon dioxide emissions and COVID-19 display non-linear growth rates. The solutions to the two problems are extremely expensive, and they require interventions that deeply affect our economies and our societies. Furthermore, the solutions cannot come about without international cooperation, as neither problem respects borders.[1] Finally, science plays a critical role: uncertainty is the enemy of effective action and robust scientific research is key to accurately diagnosing the situation and implementing the correct solutions.

IN THE SHORT TERM, THE BATTLE AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS MADE AN UNINTENTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE. HOWEVER, THIS EFFECT IS LIKELY TO BE ONLY TEMPORARY.

Nevertheless, there is also a fundamental difference between the challenges: their horizon. The measures currently being put in place to fight the novel coronavirus would have been unfathomable just months ago. Yet the immediacy and visibility of the virus's impact on human and societal health jump-started governments, companies and entire societies into drastic action. The effects of climate change, in contrast, are already being felt, but they

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1. In the case of COVID-19, national or regional borders may be temporarily closed and may for a time stem the increase in transmission; however, effectively maintaining border closures for an extended period of time seems unimaginable in our globalised world.

are not felt equally around the world, and they are often subtler – for now. Scientists have been publishing warnings on the impending emergency for decades. Endless graphs have confirmed rising temperature trends and extreme weather events are already becoming more intense and frequent; yet the most invasive, direct and extreme impacts of our warming world still lie ahead.

Some action has been taken, but it is far from enough. If not addressed, the pernicious lag between scientific warnings and the action to tackle the problem will have major and irreversible consequences for the planet and its inhabitants. The issue is that humans, generally speaking, are not psychologically equipped to make the drastic changes necessary – except in acute crises, when we feel immediate and direct impacts. The same holds true for the political systems humans have built. The crux of the question for climate change, then, is how to achieve effective and rapid collective action on a critical problem with a long-term horizon.

A PRACTICABLE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK EXISTS TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE: THE PARIS AGREEMENT, WHICH WAS DESIGNED UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE. YET THE WORLD IS NOT HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THE ONLY WAY TO RIGHT THE COURSE IS THROUGH URGENT GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL ACTION.

This chapter will examine the action that has – and has not – been taken, placing the spotlight on the United Nations' past and future role. In order to do so, it answers the three deceptively simple questions (*Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?*) that guided the so-called Talanoa Dialogue in 2018,[2] and that structure the present volume on the United Nations' 75th anniversary. The reality is that a practicable global framework exists to address the climate change challenge: the Paris Agreement, which was designed under the umbrella of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Yet the world is not heading in the right direction. The only way to right the course is through urgent global, national and individual action.

2.. A facilitative dialogue held under UNFCCC auspices to take stock of collective efforts towards the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal; the dialogue involved governments, civil society, NGOs, businesses and cities.

Where are we? In what direction is the world heading?

At the time of writing, the carbon dioxide concentration in the Earth's atmosphere stood at 413 parts per million (ppm). Before the Industrial Revolution, the concentration was approximately 280 ppm. Cumulative carbon dioxide levels have been increasing year-on-year for decades, coming ever closer to the 450 ppm limit scientists have indicated as the level beyond which the effects of human interference with the climate system will become much more dangerous and unpredictable. This number roughly translates to about 2°C of warming above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

Today, however, our planet is already on average approximately 1°C warmer than it was before the Industrial Revolution (IPCC, 2018). If global greenhouse gas emissions were to continue to rise unchecked – that is, if no climate action at all were taken – the world would see temperatures rise by 4.1°C to 4.8°C on average by 2100 (Climate Action Tracker, 2019). If countries continue to implement the policies they currently have in place, global temperatures are expected to be around 3°C higher than pre-industrial levels by 2100 (UNEP, 2019). These numbers are far from compatible with the 1.5°C and 2°C limits states have committed to in order to stem global warming.

IF NO CLIMATE ACTION AT ALL WERE TAKEN – THE WORLD WOULD SEE TEMPERATURES RISE BY 4.1°C TO 4.8°C ON AVERAGE BY 2100.

For over 30 years now, countries have been cooperating to try to address the climate change challenge, primarily in the framework of the United Nations, through two principle components: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The IPCC is the essential scientific organ: through its regular assessment reports on the state of climate science and special reports on specific issues, the panel compiles a broad and broadly accepted base of policy-relevant scientific knowledge that countries can work from when designing international and national measures and policies.

The UNFCCC, on the other hand, is where the global governance of climate change mitigation and adaptation takes place. Created in 1992, the convention sets the macro-objective of stabilising "greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". It also defines principles that should guide states in their action towards that goal. One such principle is that of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, which affirms that while mitigating climate change is the responsibility of

all, states with a larger historical role in the creation of the problem and those that have more resources to address it should bear more responsibility for its solution.

Two main instruments with radically different approaches currently exist under the convention's umbrella: the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol took a regulatory approach, defining static emissions reductions targets for the so-called Annex I countries (essentially, the most developed countries) in a top-down model. Achieving ratification was difficult, however, and though the protocol did eventually come into force in 2005, it covered a relatively small segment of global emissions.

The Paris Agreement (PA), which was signed in 2015 and entered into force at record speed in 2016, could not be more different from the Kyoto Protocol. Rather than covering action by the developed countries only, it overcame the divides of the past to involve all the countries in the world, 189 of which had ratified the agreement at the time of writing. The PA offers a hybrid model with a set of collective goals: to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C or 2°C above pre-industrial levels; to improve the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change; and to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. These objectives are set collectively for the entire world, with no individual targets for states imposed from the top down. Instead, states make voluntary pledges (the so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)) on what they can and are willing to do in climate change mitigation and adaptation from the bottom up.

The question, however, is whether the sum of individual state pledges will suffice to meet the global goal. The Paris Agreement foresees regular stocktake moments to make these calculations, providing a clear view of the state of ambition. States are expected to submit new NDCs every five years, representing a progression past previous NDCs and reflecting their highest possible ambition. This construct is designed to create a dynamic "ratcheting up" mechanism to reach the global objective. Yet there is no enforcement mechanism to ensure states deliver on their pledges. Instead, the Paris Agreement works through an enhanced transparency framework, where other states, civil society and indeed domestic constituencies can hold their leaders accountable when ambition or action is lacking. A final novel point in the Paris Agreement is the increased involvement of non-state actors: that is, sub-state actors such as cities or regions, private actors such as companies, and civil society actors including NGOs (see Garcia-Chueca in this volume).

Is the Paris model delivering? At this point, no. Analyses have shown that if all policies from the first round of national pledges are implemented, we are still headed for a world which will be approximately 3°C warmer this century (UNEP, 2019). Does this mean, then, that the Paris model is broken? The answer to this question is also negative. The agreement was designed precisely as a dynamic process to increase ambition – and this is why 2020, which is both the fifth anniversary of the agreement and the 75th anniversary of the UN, is so important. This is the year that states are requested to communicate or submit new and/or updated pledges to the UNFCCC. The UN Secretary-General, among others, has made it a top priority to encourage countries to increase their ambition substantially.

IS THE PARIS MODEL DELIVERING? AT THIS POINT, NO. THE WORLD WE WANT TO CREATE WAS DEFINED IN 1992, WHEN THE UNFCCC WAS ESTABLISHED: A WORLD WITHOUT DANGEROUS ANTHROPOGENIC INTERFERENCE WITH THE CLIMATE SYSTEM. TODAY, HOWEVER, THIS HAZARDOUS HUMAN INTERFERENCE IS ALREADY WELL UNDERWAY.

Where do we want to go? What kind of world do we want to create?

The world we want to create was defined in 1992, when the UNFCCC was established: a world without dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Today, however, this hazardous human interference is already well underway: we have experienced 1°C of warming over pre-industrial levels and are seeing climate change impacts on the ground. At this point, therefore, we must accept that climate change is already happening, and work to create a world in which warming does not progress to even more dangerous levels, through emissions mitigation. For the climate change impacts that can no longer be avoided, however, adaptation will be critical.

In the Paris Agreement, all of the world's states agreed to limit global warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to keep warming below 1.5°C. Even half a degree makes a difference: as shown in the IPCC's *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, many of the physical impacts of climate change do not follow a linear track. That is, the impacts of 2°C of warming are far worse than those of 1.5°C in terms of sea level rises, extreme heat, water scarcity, crop yields and more. To provide an example, a modelling study found that under a 1.5°C scenario, approximately 14% of the global population would experience regular severe heatwaves (like the European heatwave of 2003, which led to tens of thousands of heat-exposure-related deaths). At 2°C of warming, that rate shoots up to almost 37% percent (referenced in IPCC, 2018).

Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that lead to global warming and climate change and aiming for the 1.5°C target is therefore imperative. Various organisations have generated mitigation scenarios compatible with the 1.5°C goal. The good news is that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees is still achievable. The bad news, however, is that it will require rapid action at unprecedented scale – in the shape of a 7.6% reduction in emissions every year for the coming ten years (UNEP, 2019). Global emissions are now projected to drop by 8% in 2020 (IEA, 2020), but this has only been possible through an inconceivably abrupt shutdown of a large portion of the world's economy and transport.

Moreover, once the world's economic motors restart after the COVID-19 crisis, it is likely that the trend of emissions and consequent global warming will resume. China provides a demonstration: in January 2020, the country was the first in taking the unprecedented step of radically halting a large part of its economic activity to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. While the measures were in place, China's national emissions were a quarter lower than over the same period in 2019 (a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 200 million tonnes). The decrease in economic activity led to declining energy consumption and, in turn, lower greenhouse gas emissions. However, this change was not permanent. Data showed from early March for example, that nitrogen dioxide levels and coal consumption had returned to their normal levels (Myllvirta, 2020).

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT LIMITING WARMING TO 1.5 DEGREES IS STILL ACHIEVABLE. THE BAD NEWS, HOWEVER, IS THAT IT WILL REQUIRE RAPID ACTION AT UNPRECEDENTED SCALE – IN THE SHAPE OF A 7.6% REDUCTION IN EMISSIONS EVERY YEAR FOR THE COMING TEN YEARS.

Since greenhouse gas emissions are an inseparable part of our global economy and lifestyles, reaching the 1.5 degree goal requires nothing less than a wholesale transformation of current economies and energy models. Today, there are competitive alternatives to fossil fuels for many (though not all) applications. Renewable energy prices, for example, are dropping and solar and wind are vying with other fuels to provide new power generation capacity. Yet up to now, this has not led to a true energy transition: 80% of the world's energy consumption is still provided through fossil fuel combustion. Renewable energy sources have not *displaced* the other fuels: they have simply *added* a layer on top of the world's cumulative energy consumption, contributing to an ever-growing skyscraper. While the relative shares of certain fossil fuels (such as biomass and coal) have decreased over certain periods, their contributions to global primary energy supply

have *increased* in absolute terms, along with the world's growing energy demand (Newell & Raimi, 2018).

A *true* energy transition (rather than a mere pattern of addition) is thus necessary to create the scenario we want, and it will require action on all fronts: policies, technology and behaviours. Renewable or other zero-carbon energy sources will need to be further incorporated into the mix, and energy efficiency must be ramped up. In regions that still rely very heavily on biomass (charcoal and fuelwood), including a large majority of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa, it will be imperative to choose low- or zero-carbon options to meet growing energy needs. However, in order to attain the 1.5°C target, further technologies will likely need to be implemented, including carbon emissions removal. The IPCC's special report on the 1.5°C target concludes that unless energy demand declines drastically (which would require major behavioural changes), there will be a need for carbon dioxide capture and geological storage or use.[3]

THE LONGER ADAPTATION EFFORTS ARE POSTPONED, THE MORE EXPENSIVE THEY WILL BE.

While mitigation receives a lot of attention, adaptation to the already inevitable effects of climate change must advance in parallel. This, too, is urgent: the longer adaptation efforts are postponed, the more expensive they will be. Adaptation will be necessary everywhere, but particularly in the world's least developed and small island developing states, which often do not have the means to adapt (and have only contributed tangentially to the problem of climate change in the first place). These states will require financial assistance, which developed countries have committed to through the UNFCCC. However, more of it will need to flow to adaptation: at present, only about one-fifth of climate finance is used for adaptation purposes, with the rest flowing to mitigation projects (OECD, 2019).

How do we get there? How can we shorten the distance between these two worlds?

The only way to tackle this all-encompassing problem, shortening the gap between the current and the desired trajectories, is an all-in approach. This involves three levels of action, each of which is essential and feeds into the others: the global, national and individual.

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3. Most of the scenarios in the report rely heavily on bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS).

At the global level, the Paris Agreement is now nearly five years old. Despite the fact that action under the agreement is not yet compatible with the targets it enshrines, it remains the strongest and most representative (and therefore legitimate) instrument currently available to address climate change, having been signed by all 197 UNFCCC parties after many years of negotiations. Given prior experiences (the failure to reach a global treaty at the Copenhagen climate summit in 2009, for example) and the state of multilateralism in general, it is currently unlikely that a different model (for example, with more top-down ambition or stronger enforcement mechanisms) would be acceptable to a large number of states. Unless a major crisis occurs, the Paris Agreement is therefore the most viable instrument for moving climate action forward in the coming years.

Moreover, the catalytic nature of the agreement is designed to enable stronger climate action (Hale, 2018). At this point, work is necessary on two main fronts. On the one hand, it is critical that the ongoing UNFCCC negotiations on the technical implementation of the Paris Agreement – such as on Article 6 (international carbon markets) and common timeframes for future NDCs – move forward and lead to strong outcomes that will facilitate ambitious climate action. On the other hand, the new or updated NDCs that states submit this year need to represent a strong progression past the previous set, seeking alignment with the

AN ALL-IN APPROACH INVOLVES THREE LEVELS OF ACTION, EACH OF WHICH IS ESSENTIAL AND FEEDS INTO THE OTHERS: THE GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL.

1.5°C target and carbon neutrality by 2050, as called for by the UN Secretary-General. At the time of writing, 104 countries had stated their intention to enhance ambition or action in an NDC by 2020, but these countries only represent 15% of global emissions (Climate Watch, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis has shifted the world's focus away from this issue, but it is vital that large emitters commit to enhance their ambition: without their contributions, the window towards maximum warming of 1.5°C or even 2°C will close rapidly.

The Paris Agreement should not, however, be the only instrument deployed. An all-in approach also involves action by other international organisations – for example, those working on energy-related or economic issues – and by smaller groups of states looking to advance a particular issue. The latter model, which some have termed minilateralism (Naím, 2009) or the club model, presents well-known downsides, such as a lack of representativeness and sometimes accountability. However, the urgency and complexity of the climate change challenge calls for action on all possible fronts.

A number of issues in particular will need stronger or more effective global governance going forward. One is geoengineering, which encapsulates a host of different techniques, from nature-based and technological carbon dioxide removal to solar radiation management. At the very least, there is need for transparency and reporting on these technologies and their use at the international level. Another concerns the areas of aviation and shipping, whose emissions are both growing – in fact, if global aviation were a country, it would feature in the list of the world's top ten emitters (European Commission, n.d.). Both the International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization have shifted into a higher gear on emissions-related matters in recent years, but ensuring ambition is high and loopholes are closed will be critical in the near future.

With global governance of climate change-related issues taking place in many different fora, it should be the role of the UNFCCC not only: (1) to maintain and strengthen the Paris Agreement, its processes and mechanisms, while continually seeking opportunities for further cooperation; but also (2) to play a catalytic role in accelerating climate governance and actions on many levels; and (3) to monitor and report on the action taking place in other institutions focusing on aspects of global climate governance. The IPCC, meanwhile, remains indispensable for its continuous assembly of a solid science-based battery of evidence to analyse the climate change problem and its potential solutions. Finally, to complement the communication of climate science, global governance organisations should also strive to disseminate and multiply success stories, showcasing climate actions with net positive effects and co-benefits.

Moving to the next level of action, it is clear that global governance cannot be effective without states. Simply put, and as described above, the Paris Agreement objectives – and the world we want to create – cannot be reached without action at the national level. The most immediate contribution countries can make is to submit highly ambitious NDCs to the UNFCCC process in the course of 2020, despite the recent COVID-19-related postponement of the 2020 COP26 summit. States and organisations aspiring to climate leadership, such as the EU, should submit their NDCs as soon as possible despite the summit change, providing an example to the rest of the world. The NDCs submitted by major emitters (China, the EU, and India, among others) will be followed closely, as will the US presidential elections in November: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has announced that he will rejoin the Paris Agreement immediately if elected. In light of their historical responsibility, developed countries must show and deliver on their mitigation ambition while meeting their climate finance commitments.

Another high-impact short-term action is to ensure that the post-COVID economic recovery and stimulus plans target clean energies and technologies. The decisions taken now will be critical in the fight against climate change – but in the current context, public support for ambitious climate action may wane as economic and employment concerns surge. Policymakers will therefore need to design stimulus programs carefully and pragmatically, linking "green" initiatives directly with jobs and growth. Forward-looking national governments, furthermore, could also make the most of the low oil prices to remove fossil fuel subsidies while avoiding large economic impacts for their populations. Looking to the medium and long term, the coming energy transition will create geopolitical and economic opportunities, which governments should study carefully (some states, such as China, have already moved ahead of the curve in this regard). Finally, public opinion on climate change issues will be critical overall. As demonstrated by the *gilets jaunes* demonstrations in France, governments will need to ensure that climate policies do not unequally affect certain groups in society. The just transition paradigm is a model here: for those groups most affected by the energy transition (workers in sectors such as coal mining, for example), policymakers will need to provide retraining, compensation or alternatives.

STATES AND ORGANISATIONS ASPIRING TO CLIMATE LEADERSHIP, SUCH AS THE EU, SHOULD SUBMIT THEIR NDCS, PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.

Shifting to the individual level, 2019 in particular showed that public opinion can be a driver for the creation of climate policy. Both individual actions that grew into larger movements (such as Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future strikes) and work by more established NGOs (such as Greenpeace, E3G and Carbon Tracker) can download framings of urgency from the global level or horizontally and upload their preferences to the national level. Moreover, the Paris Agreement offers many opportunities for individuals and NGOs to monitor national and international ambition and action and make an impact, through its enhanced transparency mechanism. Finally, along with policy and technology, individual behaviour and choices will make an important contribution to climate change mitigation. In the case of COVID-19, an acute crisis led individuals to understand the importance of their actions. In the case of climate change, except for those already suffering the effects of global warming on a daily basis (as is the case of the inhabitants of some small low-lying island states), it may be more difficult to instil the importance of behavioural changes. Narratives and education can play a major role in helping to overcome the issue of time horizons that climate change poses.

Conclusion

As is logical and necessary, the COVID-19 crisis is currently dominating our lives, economies and politics. However, another, slower-simmering crisis with longer-lasting and potentially irreversible consequences for the planet and our species is still ongoing: climate change. Despite the similarities in the problem structures of the two issues, governments and individuals will be slower to react to the latter challenge, for one clear reason: climate change represents a "tragedy of the horizons" (Mark Carney, 2015). Yet addressing the longer-term climate crisis is of life- and generation-defining importance. Indeed, the switch last year by many organisations to the terms "climate crisis" or "climate emergency" represents an attempt to break past the issue of the horizons to achieve the action that is so dearly needed.

While our focus must now necessarily be on fighting the pandemic, climate action and urgency must not disappear. In the short term, the stimulus measures that are put into place to address the economic situation after the COVID-19 crisis must be green. When it comes to global governance, the UN at 75 has taken on climate change as one of its major challenges. As a whole, 2020 may have careened off track and COP26 may have been postponed, but the momentum for action in 2020 must not be lost. The Paris Agreement and its ratcheting up mechanism are currently the world's best shot at collective action to address climate change, and this year more than ever, strong leadership – by the UN as well as ambitious UNFCCC parties such as the EU – will be critical to keep climate action (and indeed the planet) on track.

ANOTHER HIGH-IMPACT SHORT-TERM ACTION IS TO ENSURE THAT THE POST-COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND STIMULUS PLANS TARGET CLEAN ENERGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES.

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AS A WHOLE, 2020 MAY HAVE CAREENED OFF TRACK AND COP26 MAY HAVE BEEN POSTPONED, BUT THE MOMENTUM FOR ACTION IN 2020 MUST NOT BE LOST.

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In collaboration with:

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a global health crisis that has accelerated dangerous dynamics in international relations. The great power rivalry between the US and China has sharpened, while conflict-affected societies like Libya, Ukraine and Yemen face another layer of complexity and disruption. Social inequalities are widening and dissatisfaction growing as economies contract and the recovery is slower than initially forecast. The overlap between the global health and socio-economic crisis and the climate emergency present the UN with the greatest challenge since its creation as it approaches its 75th anniversary. As the pandemic drags on, in an age of widening fault lines and protracted crises the question of how to enhance multilateralism and a rules-based international order appears both urgent and demanding.

This CIDOB Report examines the challenges currently facing the UN and offers pathways for the reform and strengthening of multilateralism and global cooperation. The report is structured in two parts: the first addresses how the UN has dealt with today's key challenges, from development to peacebuilding to violent extremism; the second provides analysis and recommendations for rebuilding a multilateral world order.