The United Nations building in Manhattan on the first official day of the 75th United Nations General Assembly on 22 September 2020 in New York (Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Rhodes Forum Report

Can multilateral cooperation be saved?

DOC Research Institute (2020)

DOC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Can multilateral cooperation be saved?

The 2020 Rhodes Forum report

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Foreword

Building on the successful precedent of the first edition of the Rhodes report in 2019, the DOC has decided to make this report an annual fixture by presenting the state of thinking around our chosen theme for the Rhodes Forum.

Whereas the 2019 edition was titled 'Civilisations, states, world order: Where are we? Where are we heading?', the 2020 asks more humbly and soberly, 'Can multilateral cooperation be saved?'. As this year is the of 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two and the creation of the United Nations, the DOC intended to devote the 18th annual Rhodes Forum to the reform and reinvention of international cooperation.

Since its post-war inception, the international system has guaranteed peace, stability, and development. However, avoiding its collapse is now urgent. Reasons to reform and reinvent international cooperation include: the rise of inequality across the world and within most societies; the growing discontent with globalisation all over the world; digitalisation's disruption of economies and people's lives; increasing heterogeneity among members states; profound demographic shifts; the widespread rise of populism; and mistrust of international organisations linked to both a lack of representation and a lack of effectiveness in tackling severe global challenges.

Evidently, the 'contract' that brought together the winners of World War Two, despite their profound ideological divides, is falling apart. The Covid-19 crisis is not the cause of this unravelling but it is certainly aggravating and accelerating the phenomenon and thus emphasising the urgent need to reform and reinvent international cooperation.

Whilst almost two-thirds of the world's population was under lockdown in April 2020, the DOC launched the 'Berlin Call initiative', a high-level group of brilliant thinkers, leaders, and influencers from across the world, to reflect on how to reform and reinvent the terms and modalities of international cooperation. A series of online roundtable exchanges have taken place over the intervening months to address vitally important topics, such as the 'dilemma' between national sovereignty and international cooperation; the importance of values and interests that bring humanity together; and leadership.

Instead of a polarised discourse in which opposing perspectives don't listen to one another and ignore possible agreement, the DOC has by all means attempted to bring antagonistic perspectives together under the same tent, in order build common ground.

According to Carl Bindenegal and Stephan Richter (2018), "globalists are patriots who have a worldview that is not limited to the boundaries of one state". At the DOC, we have the conviction that patriots and globalists can, and will, find common ground, instead of continuing to antagonise and demonise each other.

The analysis and the recommendations in this report, written by Prof. Richard Higgott, draw from the informal exchanges organised by the DOC, and the contributions received from several members of the Berlin Call initiative. They would have been at the heart of the discussions in the Rhodes Forum and have been developed in the spirit of the DOC, bringing together all perspectives, cultures, and civilisations for discussion on an equal footing, with the goal of fostering the emergence of shared worldviews. The DOC is extremely grateful to all those who have contributed to the report.

The report remains a working document and the DOC will certainly welcome remarks and feedback. Our goal is to contribute to a revival of the flame of multilateralism and to a revitalising of citizen support for and trust in international cooperation that respects all cultures and civilisations.

Jean-Christophe Bas
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Executive summary

Multilateralism, as a principle means of developing collective action problem-solving for the key challenges facing the globe, is in crisis. The antecedents and current dynamics of this crisis are well understood. Its contours were outlined in the 2019 Rhodes Forum report. This 2020 report takes the discussion to the next stage by trying to identify what needs to be done across a spectrum from understanding the importance of human behaviour through to engineering institutional reform, in order to help reset multilateralism. The *leitmotif* of the report is *possibilism*. That is a focus on not only what should be done but also on what might or can be done. The report has three parts.

Part one addresses the limits of humanity's ability to upscale its understanding of identity, community, and solidarity to international cooperation. Though not without success over the millennia in giving substance to these ideas at the level of the state and below, the final push to secure community and solidarity beyond the level of the nation-state remains elusive. Part one suggests that to make progress developing cooperation beyond the level of the state, we need to rethink the degree to which 'universalism' continues to have contemporary utility for understanding values beyond the level of the state. Part one does not reject the core elements of universalist thinking about international cooperation but argues humanity needs to practice the art of what Rutger Bregman calls *possibilism* in the application of these values. Although philosophical in tone, the issues raised in part one nevertheless cast major policy shadows over our ability to engage in cooperative decision-making at the transnational level.

Part two, with a more practical and applied approach, suggests why the discussion of human behaviour matters for internationalism, multilateralism, and international institutionalism as the basis for collective decision-making. It identifies what we have learned about the utility of multilateral institutions and behaviour during the 20th century and the dangers implicit in the 'unlearning' of its core principles in the 21st century. It considers the dangers of 'unravelling' in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and identifies a series of propositions that need to be adopted if we are to secure a multilateral reset.

The practicalities of any reset in an age beset by global challenges – be they pandemics, increasing environmental damage or heightened political, security, economic, and technological (AI, cyber) contests between the major players – are neither obvious nor easy. Part three of the report therefore focuses precisely on the 'how to' question. In a series of self-contained mini reports and reflections by distinguished specialists, the report identifies the core obstacles and what we need to do to overcome them in order to reset the contemporary multilateral decision-making order. Lessons to be taken on board from the report include:

(i) Recognising the 'multiplex' nature of contemporary global governance;
(ii) Distinguishing the practice of multilateralism from the ideology of globalism;

(iii) Recognising the need to bridge the 'compatibility gap' between international collective action problem-solving and national policymaking sovereignty;
(iv) Taking account of perspectives from the major players; notably but not only the US and China, but also the EU, India, Russia, and the major world regions;
(v) Seeing leadership not only as a collective *institutional* process, but also recognising it is people who make policy and take decisions and thus *personal* (-ised) political leadership, evinced in the practice of leaders, also matters.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations to help overcome the current malaise and reset multilateral cooperation if we are to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Preamble

2020 is 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. To reflect this, 21 September saw the adoption of a Declaration supported by member states. Acknowledging the lack of a current global commitment to collective action problem-solving, the core argument of the Declaration was that today's global challenges can only be successfully addressed via a 'reinvigorated multilateralism'. This is an obvious, but not unique observation. Much contemporary analysis of the state of international order says the same thing. Indeed, the 2019 Rhodes Forum report (DOC Research Institute, 2019) argued that the continuance of a cooperative multilateral world order was, at best, in the balance if the principle elements of international institutional decision-making – such as the UN and its agencies and the international economic institutions such as the WTO – were left to languish in the face of an increasingly nationalist, transactional, combative, international diplomacy.

The 2019 report rated the chances of a new Cold War between the US and China and the weakening of the post-World War Two international architecture as more likely than not. The report's judgment was based on both a historical reading of international relations in the post-World War Two era and the implications of contemporary global challenges in the economic, security, and cultural domains. It did not foresee, although it should have, the impact of an unanticipated global pandemic which, along with environmental considerations, looks to be having an as great, if not greater, impact on the future of world order as the traditional security and economic concerns.

The 2019 report was not of course alone in this shortcoming. The lack of foresight and vision on the part of most – although not all – international socio-political and economic observers to anticipate such an event must rate as the largest collective analytical oversight since we failed to notice the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union. But just as the end of the Cold War provoked retrospective soul searching, so too Covid-19 has called forth a veritable torrent of analysis on the future of how we manage 'world order', and all the attendant implications for international institutional and multilateral decision-making and other forms of international dialogue and cooperation.

Contemporary analysis runs from the sensible and moderate, through the radical and outlandish, to the downright conspiratorial and 'fake'. But one general assessment can be drawn from this plethora of competing analyses. The structures and practices of international cooperation, and multilateralism as its principal agent, will not be the same after the initial challenges of Covid-19 are contained. There can be no return to the *status quo ante*. This judgment pertains irrespective of where one sits on the cooperation-conflict spectrum in 2020 – a year that will define the course for a post-liberal era.

The aim of the 2020 Rhodes Forum report is to address this new context in which the world finds itself. It will build on the DOC's very successful initiative, the Berlin Call initiative, which sets out the competing contours of a Covid-19-determined world order. This report

takes the DOC's work to the next stage.[1] It will address a series of crucial questions for practitioners of international relations (governments, international institutions, and the panoply of public and private non-state actors alike) that pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic but which will be further influenced by it; notably,

- Is the world likely to become less prosperous, less open, with growing economic de-coupling and decreasing free trade; and less free, with increased digital surveillance likely to remain long after its utility in the battle against Covid-19 has declined (see Coyer and Higgott, 2020)?
- Can we, and if so, how do we ensure *some kind* of global order underwritten by *some kind* of collective action capable of addressing contemporary global policy problems?
- Will we continue to see the growth of an increasingly combative international system as states seize the opportunity of the pandemic to enhance, or claw back, their national sovereignty in this age of re-emerging geopolitics? (Kaplan, 2020 and Walt, 2020)?
- Assuming Covid-19 is eventually contained, will we still continue towards a more China-centric but polarised world in which the role and the standing of the US is further diminished (Campbell and Doshi, 2020)?
- How do we, indeed can we, reassert the continued practical utility of multilateralism in the face of an increasingly bilateral and transactional approach to diplomacy that has been nourished by a growing populist-nationalist zeitgeist since at least 2008, and in which even the EU proclaims its new "geopolitical Commission" (see Higgott and Van Langenhove, 2020)? In short, can multilateralism be saved?

These questions are the focus of this report. Although they are given added salience by the fact that the UN in its 75th year, this report cannot be a stocktaking exercise for the UN or indeed those other multilateral institutions that have, to a greater or lesser extent, participated in global political and economic decision-making in the post-World War Two era. Rather, the report is future-oriented about the fate of multilateralism, even to the extent of asking about the very survival prospects of some of the core organisations in the institutional architecture that are unlikely to survive unless they undergo major reform.

As we head deeper into a global recession – and if the US in 2021 fails to re-engage with, let alone lead, international recovery in a manner befitting its global status – Covid-19 could become the page break for the old post-World War Two, US-led order. In its place, and

[1] The *Berlin Call* project consisted of two major initiatives: (i) The production of a concept paper *Three scenarios for world order after Covid-19: Can multilateral cooperation be saved?* The concept paper set out the competing alternative paths that might be developed in the face of Covid-19 (Higgott, 2020); and (ii) Two high-level roundtables of senior practitioners, policymakers, and scholars to discuss the paper and bring forth a series of recommendations for where we should go from here to help reset a cooperative world order. The ideas emanating from these two roundtables are reflected in this report. The attendees at the roundtables can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

without international institutional reform, we will see an increasingly combative order of regional blocs centred on the United States and China and within which multilateral collective action problem-solving will play little part. What we do not yet know is what the long-term impact of Covid-19 portends. Will it offer impetus for international reform or greater nationalist intransigence? The latter will be the case if we do not take the opportunity presented by such a profound crisis to rethink where we are going in terms of international cooperation. The progress of humanity requires it and there are historical precedents.

The UN and the Bretton Woods institutions were created at a time of enlightened self-interest by leading nations. These institutions have remained central to the world's largely peaceful order of the past 75 years. But they require reform at the very time that they are needed more than ever. The social, scientific, and technological advances that humanity saw during the second half of the 20th century did not happen by chance. They were occasioned by choices made. Now is the time for choices to be made again if we are to deal with contemporary global challenges. These challenges will not be solved by nationalism and the creation of a bifurcated, bipolar world, but by cooperation and the realisation of a shared destiny. This report searches for a way forward based on collective thinking and multilateral action.

Introduction. The crisis of multilateralism: Can we find a way forward?

Common sense tells us that neither global pandemics, nor environmental crises, can be solved by national responses alone. Sooner or later, if humanity is to survive, the cooperative urge will need to reassert itself. Coming to terms with the realisation that global pandemics will fundamentally influence the future of international relations in a manner not dissimilar to politico-security and economic crises in the past does not appear to be taking place.

Practitioners, and most analysts, of international relations remain very conservative in their thinking and (mis)perception is still perhaps the most significant driver of great power foreign policy on those issues that require collective, transnational responses. We still largely possess an oligarchic state-centric vision of the world (G2, G7, G8, through to the G20). But if this traditional mode of thinking – quintessentially the political culture of 20th-century, habit-driven, realist geopolitics – continues to prevail, we should ask, 'to what end?' Hegemonic thinking by either rising or declining great powers takes insufficient account of the diversity of international actors and policy challenges and how they require different modes of thinking and *proportional*, practical responses. To illustrate this point, between 9/11 and 2020, the US spent $180 billion *per annum* on counter-terror but only $2 billion *in total* on pandemic prospects.

Nothing is written in stone. Hard-headed analysis accompanied by innovative normative thinking – the two are normally discrete from one another – could, and should, force us to think beyond traditional positioning in international relations. For example: can we not ask whether the need for a joined-up global health policy – global pandemics require global policy responses – might not help us reform the old, or better still, kick-start a new, multilateralism?

If the pandemic can shock global leaders into recognising what is lost by the pursuit of great power competition and the failure to cooperate in multilateral decision-making on global policy issues, then Covid-19 would have served at least one useful purpose. If we are to mitigate current trends towards a further de-coupled, nationalist world order, states will need a new internationalism. But this must be 'hard-headed' internationalism. This characterised the initial post-World War Two era. There is no reason why it cannot happen again. But it will have to be made to happen. Exit strategies for Covid-19 without global cooperation will make no long-term sense at all.

With this background in mind, the 2020 Forum report advances both a normative and applied approach, leading it to a series of policy recommendations. The report will test the circumstances and ways that multilateral, institutional, cooperative approaches to decision-making on key global issues must be, and indeed can be, reformed and rebooted in the 2020s. While practical in its approach, the report unapologetically offers a normative defence of the *principles* of multilateral cooperation in the face of the onslaught that has hit multilateralism

as both principle and in practice as institutions such as the WTO and the WHO, and projects such as the EU, have come under challenge in recent times.

But the report is not simply a naive rehearsal of the notional benefits of multilateral institutional cooperation, devoid of any sense of the tensions and contests present in the international environment. It will be a hard-headed look that recognises that the principal global institutions are in need of serious reform if they are to have a utility in a post Covid-19 era. The future of humanity requires us to think beyond traditional ordering principles captured by the still prevailing assumptions of the Westphalian sovereign state system.

As important as the concept of sovereignty has been, and continues to be in contemporary international relations, the Westphalian system's monocultural and statist essence does not fit the 21st century. What Hans Morgenthau called Westphalia's 'nationalist universalism', which for nearly four centuries, determined the world's plurality of morals and ethics, at the same time as it minimised cultural diversity, makes no sense in the 21st century. Any future order will need to account for and accommodate a range of factors driven by globalisation, which are not going away; although they are changing in an era of digitalisation and a re-asserted 'civilisational' diversity pushed by major states such as China and India and secondary states such as Turkey and Russia.

It is a virtue of the DOC Research Institute that it endeavours to understand the role of civilisation states in international relations and this report creates a way of thinking about multilateral cooperation that accounts for the nature of this diversity in a manner currently not present in the multilateral institutional context. Notwithstanding a recognised need for reform, we are in danger of forgetting why multilateral institutions developed in the second half of the 20th century. Part two will suggest that while our priority in the era beyond 2020 clearly has to be new and innovative, it makes no sense to unlearn our institutional and multilateral history. Yes, reform is needed but that is not the same as suggesting that we need to start *de novo*. We need to refine the earlier lessons – not unlearn them – and notably take account of the impact of digitalisation upon them. Sure, multilateral institutions do not always work optimally and from time to time, as now, they need major reform, or in some instances even mothballing.

The report will proceed with a brief introductory discussion of what might be acceptable as core global values – notably solidarity and community. But a one-size-fits-all model of acceptable global values does not exist. We need to ask how we can underwrite *some kind* of global order which is also, in turn, underwritten by *some kind* of value-based, collective action problem-solving capability. We need to carry this conversation forward in a managed but positive manner. This largely philosophical discussion will be followed by a review of the context for new economic and political thinking on multilateralism emanating from the structural changes in the global political economy.

The discussion of these structural changes will have three facets**:**

(i) A recognition that the future of economic globalisation is not fatally determined but rather undergoing fundamental change in both its negative and positive characteristics. We need to take account of trends in the direction of de-globalisation and de-coupling.
(ii) The report will reflect on how we harness the growing importance of non-traditional hybrid actors possessing 'state-like properties' as key players in global decision-making such as cities, NGOs, civil society groups, and large corporations – especially the digital giants. The report will factor in the transformational impact of digitalisation and social media as drivers of global communications and international political, cultural, and economic relations and particularly their role in the changing distribution of political power and how to respond to it.
(iii) While recognising the strength of the trend, the report will resist the idea that bipolarity is a *fait accompli*, notwithstanding the dangers of a *new* style of Cold War between the US and China emerging if other actors cannot cooperate to head it off.

The major section of the report, part three, will focus on the issue of global decision-making and the degree to which collective – essentially multilateral – decision-making can be restored. The core argument is that global cooperation is going nowhere without institutional reform. Of course, institutions at times get captured or compromised or become tired and bureaucratically sclerotic as with the WHO or UNESCO. Or events overtake their mission, as with some key elements of the WTO's agenda. But that an institution might be functioning sub-optimally is, in the first instance, a reason to try to reform it, not to get rid of it. Not all the post-war institutions would be created today in their current form. But most still have important functional roles which, if well implemented, we would want to have available to us, one way or another, as a global community.

In terms of practical *institutional leadership*, it is time to recognise that it is not simply about numbers (G2, G7, G8, or G20). As Ian Goldin articulates for us in part three, issue-based hybrid G-Plus N groups, operating as *critical mass* decision-making communities in given policy areas is one way forward. No single state can lead on every issue. But usually eight-to-twelve states will represent over 80% of the interest in a given policy area. So basically, we need a revised rules-based international institutional order driven by different constituencies for different policy or issue areas. We could begin by identifying the key policy areas and the five-to-ten key players in each area and asking how coalitions of the willing might be built in each case. These ideas are developed in several contributions in part three.

A major issue in any reform process that often remains unaddressed is the question, 'from whence cometh global leadership?' This is perhaps the most discouraging element of the contemporary conversation**.** This is an issue of agency. Specifically, it is about people in power. It is an issue that is often dodged for fear of offending individual leaders. But we will get nowhere if we fail to recognise that many of the world's major global leaders are by personal socio-psychological disposition, ill-suited, if not downright opposed, to the international cooperative endeavour. Until we start asking appropriate questions about

leadership and especially what we have got, and more importantly what we are looking for, in the behaviour of world leaders, we will get nowhere. Populist authoritarianism of either the right or the left is not conducive to multilateral cooperation.

Part 1. The 'values question': Some hard thoughts on how to develop human community and solidarity at the international level

Introduction: In search of humane internationalism

In any discussion of how we reassert the importance of international cooperation, the role of human values, beliefs, and practices built on those beliefs is the area that elicits the least commonality of thinking. As we have departed the era when the ideational hegemony of liberalism was pre-eminent, other thinking has come to the fore. While all theorists, and indeed most practitioners, would in principle accept that morality, ethics, and values should play an important part in international relations, the principle is more often acknowledged in theory than implemented in practice. At this stage, there is little or no universalism of thinking on what might constitute human values and how they might be operationalised.

In his extremely useful intervention in box 1, Adrian Pabst has captured the dilemma we face by privileging the role of values in international relations in general and the search for international cooperation in particular. He does so by offering us a way to unpack the oft-confused relationship between values, norms, and culture. Specifically, he shows us how important it is to make a distinction between values and norms on the one hand and to consider the impact of cultural difference on how states practice their values on the other. We must be able to do this if we are to overcome our conceptual confusion.

Box 1: Culture, values, and norms: Understanding the difference, Adrian Pabst

It is a paradox of our time that values are both unifying and divisive. Democracy and human rights, for example, are seen as universal – yet they feature prominently in the 'culture wars', which are as much international as they are national. This reflects a fundamental tension in world politics: the universal status of the liberal values promoted by the West is increasingly disputed around the globe. Within Western civilisation there are deepening divisions between more liberal and more conservative cultures, while the rising powers of China, India, Turkey, and Russia privilege their own civilisational traditions over the values of the West. Arguably, we are seeing a growing contest between liberal value universalism and non-liberal cultural exceptionalism.

Long before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, much of the multilateralist architecture established in the post-1945 era already seemed to be unravelling. The erosion of multilateralism calls into question a commitment to at least four commonly assumed values:

- *(i) Democracy based on free elections and an orderly transfer of power;*
- *(ii) The rule of law that includes international legal agreements and norms;*
- *(iii) A respect for the dignity of the person grounded in fundamental freedoms and inalienable rights;*
- *(iv) The peaceful resolution of conflict within the framework of the UN Charter.*

How can we rescue these universal values and renew them in an age of polarisation that appears to rule out any agreement on substantive principles? One way is to distinguish values from norms. While there might be well be universal values, it is equally clear that norms differ widely. Diverging norms apply not simply between distinct civilisations, but also among different cultures within the same civilisation. For example, Western cultures that belong to the same civilisation have very different understandings of norms of liberty or equality or indeed the balance between them. To conceptualise the distinction between norms and values, the work of the British thinker Philip Windsor is instructive:

> *All cultures depend on translating certain underlying values into the norms of social behaviour. For the most part they promptly proceed to confuse the two; so that any criticism of a given social norm is regarded as an attack on the values it is supposed to represent. Yet toleration implies respect for other people's beliefs and values, without necessarily implying that the social norms should be condoned (Windsor, 2002, p. 86).*

A norm, according to Windsor's definition, is a cultural expression of a value. Distinct cultures can share the values of the same civilisation, but they 'normatise' or operationalise them in different ways, i.e., they understand, adopt, and enact them in a manner that diverges without however calling into question the commitment to the underlying value. Norms can therefore be defined as interpretations and expressions of common values. As such, norms underpin action because they reflect a specific cultural interpretation of a universal value that is embodied in particular practices.

If this is true, then it follows that the normative meaning of any value is governed by culture, which is ever evolving while also retaining a certain core identity. Therefore, norms – like culture – depend on a dynamic understanding. In Windsor's conception of dialogue between cultures and civilisations, it is presupposed that cultures are in a dynamic state of becoming rather than in a static, fixed state of being. If this is true, then it follows that cultural debate and civilisations in dialogue can speak to the evolving meaning of norms without either giving up on the underlying values or finding themselves in a position where they have to accept values which are external to their framework of references. Norms, if interpreted as something dynamic, can build bridges across cultural or civilisational divides.

This has a number of key implications for international politics and, notably, the UN system. First, we require a renewed defence of universality. Without universal values, it is difficult to give meaning to notions such as humanity, community, and solidarity. And without such values, the international system either requires a hegemonic power that imposes its particular worldview or interests or else slides into chaos and conflict. Secondly, not all values are at the same level. Universal human rights are more fundamental than political values such as democracy, yet how does 'the rule of law' fit into such a conceptual scheme?

For this reason, we need to distinguish between first-, second-, and third-order values. First-order values include human dignity, the sanctity of life, and the inalienable rights of the person. Second-order values encompass all the fundamental freedoms, such as free speech, freedom of conscience, religion, association, as well as fair detention, fair trial, habeas corpus, and the rule of law. Third-order values include democracy and the separation of powers, but also political values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, and the pursuit of happiness.

In relation to the UN, one task would be to achieve agreement amongst its member on a better balance between two things. One is the balance between universal human rights and universal human wrongs. Human rights are indispensable to the flourishing of persons and the sovereign equality of all countries, but in recent decades they have become the instrument of countries either to impose their will internationally or subjugate their own people – often minorities – at home. Human wrongs are not limited to practices which are already outlawed, such as torture, genocide, and other crimes against humanity. They also extend to practices including humiliation, betrayal, dispossession, and the destruction of both natural habitats and cultural inheritance.

The other balance that is required is between individual rights and mutual obligations. Reciprocal obligations are the glue that bind people together – care for others, earning esteem, duties as the source of certain entitlements, because ultimately society rests on people's contribution and the reward they receive for helping to build a common life. Linked to mutual obligations are social virtues inscribed into our human nature: mutual dependency, association, order, security, self-organisation, community, attachment, and affection. Individuals with radically different values can agree on the importance of dependency upon others and the need for human association. This also goes for the international system.

Based on obligations and virtues, a new social covenant – a binding agreement that establishes a partnership between different civilisations, generations of people, and interests – can help to forge more international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

Pabst's useful approach is not, however, without controversy, for he offers us a hierarchical ranking of different kinds of values. His threefold taxonomy distinguishes between first, second, and third tier values in a manner that would certainly be contested in some quarters. His first tier – especially human rights – is the tier that bodies such as the UN should prioritise, but which are the most easily and most often traduced tier of values. This he explains in part as a response to the breakdown of a compelling sense of mutual obligation and reciprocity among states and it is this breakdown that limits our ability to co-create those normative practices that would advance the cause of international cooperation.

Indeed, there is a growing '*dis*sensus' – culture wars are becoming as much international as they are national. Abstract principles – freedom, reason, toleration, individualism, secularism, pluralism, democracy, equality, and the like – had, rhetorically at least, dominated the first 75 years of the life of the UN. But they are now in need of a rethink that takes account of the cultural, material, and ideological forces reshaping the modern world. We must factor in the accompanying rise to international prominence of states that stress their unique civilisational qualities – especially those representing the world's two biggest populations, China and India, but others too, such as Turkey and Russia. At the core of the values discussion is the dilemma that one person's universal values may not be those of another. Sadly, rather than having conversations, we tend to be having standoffs in the contemporary era.

Some observers do not like to talk about the search for *new* values. Rather, what is preferred is the idea that post-World War Two norms and values enshrined in the UN charter and its goals – especially human solidarity – are still salient.[2] Such values, it is argued, do not need re-inventing; rather, they need a new modus operandi for adoption and implementation. In practical terms, the important question is whether a basic rules-based order can survive or whether we are returning to an order where 'might is right' and international law and the rules-based order is ignored. This position asserts that there already is an appropriate set of values enshrined in international law, the UN Charter, and conventions and agreements such as the Declaration on Human Rights, the SDGs, and the 2015 Paris Agreements. But while these agreements might imply solidarity, they do little to inculcate it, let alone operationalise solidarity as a core value in global practice.

'Humane' internationalism requires input not just from governments and politicians but also from citizens, community-level actors, and NGOs. Most of the world's populations value peace and the downsizing of militaries, just as they want to address climate change. These shared community values are there but they aren't necessarily being represented by those in power, who instead tend to talk more about the potential for military conflict and the need to fund defence infrastructures rather than peace, even though most of humanity favours a reversal of this conversation.

[2] Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser at United Nations speaking at a DOC online roundtable, 11 June 2020.

Daniel Perell, Representative to the United Nations of the Bahá'i Community, demonstrating how difficult a global conversation about values is, compares universal – or what he describes as multilateral – values to a beautiful house, absent a collective determination from anyone to live in it. It is thus difficult to suggest we rebuild it by creating alternative values, prior to trying to live in it. Sure, the design of the house is not to everyone's liking but at this stage, redesign is more appropriate than demolition. Perell is saying that humanity needs a new conversation on values but that it is not yet happening. The prevailing materialist worldview stressing growth above all else, while necessary, is insufficient for humanity's contemporary needs, he says. However, the SDGs, among other agreements, *if loyally implemented*, would get humanity farther along a road to reform towards a 'global care economy' than their many naysayers argue. In Perell's own words,

> "Since countries agreed to the SDGs, and since they are quite transformational, though still insufficient on their own, it would be very helpful to see countries take the steps necessary to achieve them. Perhaps, once this is done, the insufficiency of our values will be more exposed".[3]

However, differences of civilisational and cultural values are thought to make a unified stance impossible in a number of areas. As a consequence, it is not unusual to hear the argument that different civilisational cultures should be autonomous in policymaking terms, notwithstanding a widely held acknowledgment that some areas, such as the protection of the planet, require a common set of shared values.[4] For some core contemporary international players, this desire for autonomy is both historically based and a contemporary priority.

For example, Huiyao Wang, Director of the Center for China and Globalisation, argues that China's unique politico-socio-cultural values, rather than being respected, were being increasingly held against it during its rise over the last forty years, even to the extent, he argues, of being blamed for inequality in the US. He argues for a new narrative that looks at China differently and stops blaming it for not "becoming one of us". Quoting Deng Xiaoping, he notes that both "black cats and white cats can catch mice".[5] It is in the context of a search for a 'new narrative' that we need a new way of thinking about values and human behaviour.

[3] Daniel Perell speaking at a DOC online roundtable, 11 June 2020.
[4] Dhruv Katoch made this point at a DOC online roundtable, 11 June 2020.
[5] Huiyao Wang speaking at a DOC online roundtable, 11 June 2020.

New thinking on human nature?

The need to be reform-minded requires a leap of faith in our understanding of humanity that takes us beyond the realist view of human nature reflected in much international practice. One major problem we have in advancing international cooperation is that competitors in the international arena often think the worst, not the best, of each other. This is clearly the case, for example, in the current US-China relationship. The cooperative endeavour, for realists, is invariably driven by an acceptance of *zero-sum* competition aimed at securing *relative gains* vis-à-vis one's competitor. The problem with the realist mindset is that it does not allow for the prospect of a change of heart and the development of cooperation in which *positive-sum* arguments can lead to *absolute gains* for both parties.[6] Is – as Rutger Bregman argues in his recent book on the "hopeful history of humankind" – "our grim view of humanity … due for a radical revision" (2020, p. 19)? The jury seems to be out, but we surely need an alternative, more positive, reading of humanity and its global leadership than we have had if a cooperative global civilisational dialogue is to develop.

To answer his own question, Bregman draws on both history and psychology to offset the predominance of economic and realist political thinking on this matter. It is necessary, he argues, and provides evidence to support his argument, that we assume the best, not the worst, of human beings in the face of much contemporary pessimism. If we give salience to the historical perspective of Bregman (2020), and the psychological perspective of Stephen Pinker (2011), we would temper prevailing Hobbesian political theory and neo-classical economic views of human nature as selfish and self-interested. Rather we should privilege observable, cooperative, and altruistic tendencies in human beings. We must appeal to what Pinker calls the "better angels" of our nature, not our worst instincts.

International dialogue and cooperation are unlikely to develop if we assume human behaviour is simply driven by rational, egoistic exploitation and selfishness. Assumptions of innate human selfishness can be traced back to Thucydides, on through Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Nietzsche to the modern-day scientific pretensions of rationalist economics. As one economics professor has demonstrated, the more people study economics "the more selfish they become. We become what we teach". When this selfish view of human nature is accompanied by the prevalence of narcissistic and authoritarian tendencies among many world political leaders, the prospects of dialogue look bleak. It is to accept Machiavelli's view that "All men would be tyrants if they could" (cited by Bregman, 2020, pp. 16-18).

These dark views of human nature and behaviour are too often simply accepted rather than countered. These views are assumed to be the 'realistic' view and they find their way into the realist scholarship and diplomatic practice of international politics. If the prospects for cooperation are to be enhanced, then counter arguments must be advanced equally strongly. To do so, of course, goes against the tide of centuries of much socio-political theory. At a

[6] The theory of absolute versus relative gains is a long-standing issue in international relations (see Powell, 1971 and Snidal, 1991).

practical level it is, and will be, resisted by those who are traditionally the major beneficiaries of attendant power structures at both state and global levels.

It is innovative and courageous thinking that Bregman proposes and he warns that ridicule may be an outcome of advancing any such positive arguments about humanity. It is thinking that goes against our negative understandings of human nature and which is further bolstered by 'pluralistic ignorance'; that is, the holding of positions that people think are necessary for them to go with the flow of thought rather than appear as outliers.

But let us, not unreasonably for one moment, assume that *homo economicus* might not even exist, or even if he did – and it is mostly men that economists talk about – that he is not simply as egoistic and opportunistic as much theory assumes. Bregman provides evidence of a growing body of knowledge that suggests this is the case. He identifies a range of iterative, sustainable psychological experiments, notably the 'Pygmalion experiment', that show how holding positive expectations, by the very act of holding them, leads to iterative improvements in human behaviour (Bregman, 2020, pp. 256-259).

This positive approach to explaining human nature must be at the essence of any attempt to build international cooperation and dialogue. Without it, trust cannot be generated. We are limited in our ability to enhance the cooperative agenda until we can move away from the current cynicism and polarisation of the kind exhibited and practised by many politicians. Humanity needs to privilege increasing engagement and global trust. In simple terms, this requires making the policy process more inclusive and less exclusive. This, of course, seems unlikely in a time of populist-nationalist politics, and populist-nationalist *politicians*. The only way to change the politics is to change the behaviour of its agents – the politicians. It is about people, an argument developed in the last section of this report by Luk Van Langenhove. We need to find a way of creating a wider global feeling of ownership and citizenship. This requires greater transparency than is currently exhibited in the international order. This transparency must exhibit a greater commitment to the sentiments of solidarity and human dignity. Several changes are required.

Firstly, and as discussed at some length in part three, for trust to develop we need to engage younger generations and prepare them for global citizenship in the face of a prevailing and complacent realist-hierarchical view of international decision-making and cooperation. It is only with the early input of younger generations that we will enhance international transparency and dignity. Secondly, and in a similar vein, it requires a rigorous and forceful call for a more equitable world and especially one in which there is also a greater gender balance in global decision-making, again discussed at length in part three.

Thirdly, as Bregman suggests, we need to reinvent the idea of the global commons – initially dismissed by Garrett Harding in his influential paper 'The Tragedy of the Commons' (1968) as hippy idealism and effectively buried under the market-driven arguments of neoliberal hegemony until the global financial crisis of 2008. The concept of the global commons has only been partially rescued by Elinor Ostrom, its academic champion who in 2009 – not

merely by coincidence, but much to the surprise of many, and the outright ire of some of her professional economics colleagues – was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics. We can draw on Ostrom's theoretical insights (1990) to assist us in the reinvention of international cooperation. We need to identify a new set of what she called "design principles" for the current age. We need new design principles to help us reinvent multilateralism. We identify existing principles in part two of the report and some new initiatives in part three.

The question that cannot yet be answered is whether the Covid-19 pandemic will see enhancement or further unravelling of multilateral institutional cooperation. Will an age of pandemic assist multilateralism's comeback? This is a big challenge. But there are historical precedents for institutional development to occur in the aftermath of a major international crisis. The UN and the Bretton Woods institutions were created in a moment of enlightened self-interest after World War Two. The challenge is to repeat this precedent in the 2020s.

Part two of the report picks up these conceptual issues in a more empirical and applied policy manner. A core issue, it argues, is less the creation of new institutions and structures and more the reform of existing institutions. This requires recognition of the changes required for these institutions, 75 years after their inception. Specifically, it requires three things:

(i) Recognition of the increased diversity, or hybridity, of actors with a legitimate right to a voice in international institutions;
(ii) Recognition of the growing diversity of policy issues when contrasted with the immediate post-World War Two growth of international institutionalism;
(iii) Acknowledgment of the different modus operandi of global communication in an era of digitalisation.

Where the dominant global challenges 75 years ago were seen almost exclusively in terms of state security and the wellbeing of national economies, the contemporary era is now also beset by what we might call trans-sovereign problems such as global trafficking (in people and drugs), climate change, infectious diseases, access to clean water, and attendant global health issues such as growing antimicrobial resistance and mental health. As with pandemics and the search for vaccines, such problems transcend borders, making everyone, not just the members of states, vulnerable. They are challenges that are only ever likely to be successfully addressed by international or transnational cooperation. This requires us to be *realistic*.

Being *realistic*, as opposed to *realist*, means developing a mindset that eschews cynicism and pessimism. A pessimistic view of the contours of world order post Covid-19 is set out in figure 1 below. The key elements to note for this report are the three trends in the international domain on the right-hand side of the figure:

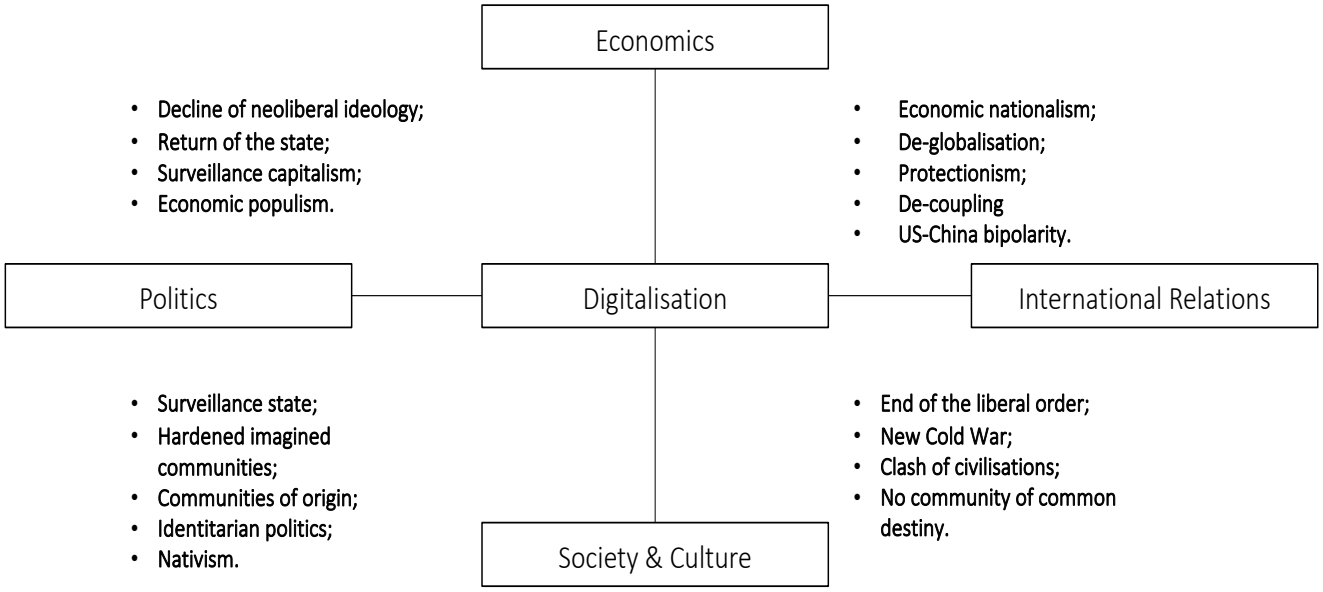
(i) In the economic domain, the continued rise of nationalism, protectionism, de-globalisation, and de-coupling;

(ii) In the politico-security domain, the continued growth of US-China competition (a new Cold War even), the rise of geopolitics, and the crisis of multilateralism;

(iii) In the cultural domain, a growing 'clash of civilisations' and the failure to make any moves in the direction of an international 'community of common destiny'.

Figure 1

A post-Covid-19 order: The pessimistic scenario



Part three and the conclusion to the report offer an alternative, more optimistic scenario for a post-Covid-19 world order. This does not mean being naively idealistic, as is the case in some excessively optimistic cosmopolitan thinking on international practice and global governance, found for example in the work of the late David Held (2004 and 2010). Rather, it means resisting pessimism and recognising the importance of what Bregman (2020) calls "possibilism"; a position that keeps the best of what we have, but which at the same time recognises a need for reform in the face of the challenges to human potential. If we do not positively address the future needs emanating from the tribulations of trying to manage world

order and the immediate impact of a globally traumatic event like the Covid-19 pandemic, then the new normal will fully approximate the scenario identified in figure 1.

Part three identifies what must be done to avoid the scenarios captured in figure 1; noting that the idea of a 'global pandemic' is now permanently inscribed onto the international policy agenda. To what degree might we reset the global order in such a way that privileges humanity's cooperative instincts at the expense of its selfish instincts? This is a big-picture question for both the short term and the long term. It is also a normative question built on some large philosophical assumptions, as well as a series of practical, short-term, applied policy questions. While assuming that the normative and the applied are not for separation, part one of the report concludes with a discussion of the essential elements of: (i) humanity's moral meta-narrative – the search for identity; and (ii) the idea of a renewed social contract.

International solidarity, identity and community: A pipe dream?

In a world of increasingly different identities, can something more universal ever be a reality or is it merely an aspiration? Is it possible for states and the institutions they create to give shape to, or kick-start, greater collective solidarity? This is not a new question for humanity, but it is becoming an increasingly pressing one. The development of moral narratives seeking to enhance solidarity as a means to underwrite community behaviour is ever present. Moral narratives have, over several millennia, progressively enabled humanity to extend its cooperative units from the family, to the tribe, village, and the city-state, through to the national state. All such communities are, in Benedict Anderson's (2016) evocative phrase, *imagined communities* or, similarly, what Tony Judt (2011) called *communities of origin*, the ultimate level of which is the nation-state.

What humanity lacks is a meta-narrative that extends our social and political boundaries to encompass a trans-sovereign global community; what we might call, following Judt, a *community of destiny*, that is, an *imagined community* beyond the level of the state, committed to dealing with humanity's trans-sovereign problems, be they pandemics, climate change, or economic development. These are problems that cannot be solved by *communities of origin*. They need transnational cooperation. But as Denis Snower (2019) notes, "Our genetic and cultural evolutionary past has not yet given us the mental resources … [as opposed to sometime instrumental instincts] … to strive for global cooperation".

While the moral meta-narrative of cooperation might not be as strong as Snower would wish, it does exist. Humanity has not been totally bereft of an ability to engage in practical cooperation beyond the level of the local and the national community. Indeed, 75 years ago an international architecture of sorts was created to rebuild the post-World War Two world: the UN system; the Bretton Woods system; the GATT; the Marshall Plan; and the Colombo Plan at their respective inceptions all reflected a spirit of positive engagement with others beyond the level of the state. The question for the Covid-19 era and beyond is the extent

change to which can be steered in the direction of a moral narrative of wider human cooperation.

The narrative of international community and world order, especially since the end of the World War Two, has almost exclusively been dominated by Western liberal thinking and an assumption of cultural assimilation of nations towards Western norms. The contours of a liberal order and its changes have been captured in a vast body of literature on the subject (for a flavour, see Ikenberry, 2011, 2017, and 2018; Nye, 2017; and Luce, 2017). But we are clearly at a crossroads where the assumptions underpinning Western liberal thought are increasingly challenged. These challenges are both theoretical and empirical. They come from across the political spectrum. They come from both within and outside of the liberal tradition. They operate at all levels of society, from critiques of liberal pedagogy in school systems, through issues of equality and opportunity within societies, to the issues surrounding the nature of world order found in this report.

Liberalism's contradictions have come into sharp relief since the end of the Cold War and especially since the global financial crisis of 2008. One of these contradictions – the assumptions of the rights of states to be equal and autonomous sitting in sharp contrast to the dramatic and growing material inequality and dependence of their marginalised citizenry alienated from liberal power structures in the Anglo-American heartland – is growing stronger. Beyond the growing internal critique of liberalism, international liberalism is more widely challenged for its universalist assumptions and its emphasis on the primacy of individualism – what distinguished realist scholar of international relations, John Mearsheimer (2019), calls the "great delusion of liberal dreams" (see also Debeeb, 2018).

For Mearsheimer, liberalism's dreams put it at odds with what he sees as the stronger politico-ideological forces and international realities of nationalism and realism. This is the contradiction in the global context where liberalism is now confronted by competing schools of thought, captured in the ubiquitous language of *globalism versus nationalism* and the emerging language of *civilisationism*. Herein lies the major problem of understanding, and indeed governing, the modern world order.

Notwithstanding the virtues of many elements of liberal order captured by Deudney and Ikenberry (2018), if this order is to survive, even in a reformed manner, we need new theory and practice for a new era that takes account of several key factors:

(a) The longstanding historical misreading of the scale of acceptance of liberal order and the accompanying growth in the competing ways in which scholars and practitioners deal with the increasingly complex nature of order must be acknowledged, and where possible, corrected.

(b) Dramatically changing global political and economic balances emanating not only from the politico-security-economic *problematique* but also the growing cultural-

civilisational *problematique* found in the increasingly powerful discourse of the "civilisational state" (see Coker, 2018).

(c) The importance of the ideas of others. Often uncritically espoused assumptions of a monopoly of Western wisdom need to be tempered and other ideas given voice in the global conversation. For want of a better expression, we need a dialectical discourse on the putative nature of a new global order.

China joins the conversation

That the rise of populism and nationalism has changed the way states in the West think about globalisation, international order, and multilateral cooperation has not been lost on the rest of the world and especially China. And China's response is not insignificant for the debate over the nature of international community

Support for a 'community of common destiny' or 'community of a shared future' is found in many of Ji Xinping's recent speeches (see Zhang, 2018) including that to the 2020 75th UNGA. It effectively represents a Chinese riposte to recent trends towards populist nationalism. Xi Jinping's positive attitude towards globalisation, unambiguously stated at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2018, was widely reported. China's views on international community and solidarity are becoming increasingly and rapidly understood too. The philosophical spine of China's views can be found in its advancement of the concept of *tianxia* – 'all under heaven' (see DOC Research Institute, 2019, pp. 61-66) – as the basis for global community. Politically, this becomes a central element in China's soft power diplomacy, offering up the bones of an alternative world order to a liberal order.

The practical aim of the idea of 'shared community' for China is to enhance its voice in the conversation over the nature of the international system. It aspires to usher in the 'era of the global community' as 'Globalisation 2.0'; that is, a version in which globalisation's bullish, essentially Hayekian economic form and its transactional political characteristics are effectively watered down by a global community approach that is more humanitarian and empathetic to things non-Western – again, in theory at least.

The claims made for *tianxia* are not trivial. One of its principal boosters, Zhao Tingyang, wants to offer it as "… a concept for a world system: a commonwealth shared by all nations, of all civilizations and for all peoples". *Tianxia* is not offered as a promise of a perfect world, nor the universalisation of Chinese values. Nor is it another Fukayama-esque reading of the 'end of history'. Rather, it is seen by Tingyang as,

> "a vision of a world politically remade to optimize the chance of enduring stability and security for all. Philosophically speaking, it suggests an ontological solution to the political problem of the clash of civilizations, as the American political scientist Samuel Huntington put it" (Tingyang, 2020).

Its principal juxtaposition to previously hegemonic liberal thinking is that it resists the individualist, utility-maximising rationality of Western economics. Rather, it focuses, again rhetorically at least, on collective prosperity. A description of the concept and its salience for Chinese thinking in the contemporary era of global pandemic is offered in box 2 by Huailiang Li, who argues that the idea of global community, built on the concept of *Tianxia*, should replace the international hegemony of liberal internationalism as the dominant discourse of globalisation.

Box 2: Characteristics of global community, Huailiang Li

The first characteristic is a shared future. All human beings are closely connected with each other and share a common future regardless of gender, age, class, social status, race, ethnicity, or nationality. Recently, many countries have adopted restrictions on international travel to stop the spread of Covid-19. This seems to indicate a separation between countries, but also illustrates that the virus is a common enemy to all of humanity. Traditionally, order is based on the power of sovereign states. When power can be passed to non-state actors in association with a number of emerging global issues including terrorism, cybersecurity, refugees, disease, financial crises, and climate change, the impacts move beyond national borders. What happens within one country is no longer a matter of concern for that country alone. Events influence other players in the global economy. Therefore, Richard Haass (2017), the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, argued that the world order has been upgraded to version 2.0, which in fact presents the characteristics of the era of global community.

The second characteristic of the era of global community is partnership. Greater cooperation is called for to safeguard our community. In a call with US President Donald Trump on 27 March 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping underscored that,

> *"[The] China-US relationship has reached an important juncture. As cooperation benefits both sides and confrontation hurts both, the former remains the only correct choice" (News18, 2020).*

In the era of global community, multilateral cooperation is crucial. This is not only true for China and the US but for other countries as well. China, by adhering to the notion of a 'Community of Shared Future for Mankind' in handling international affairs, has built partnerships at the international and regional levels, and embarked on a new path of state-to-state exchanges by choosing "dialogue and partnership over confrontation and alliance" (China Daily, 2017), according to President Xi Jinping in a report to the 19th CPC National Congress.

In the era of global community, China advocates that all countries get rid of the set pattern of alliances and confrontation, and instead encourage equality, communication, and mutual understanding. All countries need to stop making up imaginary enemies and instead seek inclusive and constructive partnerships that do not compromise third parties. And this should be the direction countries take in handling international relationships. In the face of the current pandemic, it has come to our understanding that we all live in a community with a shared future. Greater communication, closer dialogue, more openness, and coordinated policies will be our best chance to walk out of the mud, so to speak.

The third characteristic is openness and inclusiveness. The world governance model and mode of discourse need to be more diversified. A 'Community of Shared Future for Mankind' will underpin the Era of Global Community, as it gains international recognition.

In the era of globalisation 1.0, Western political leaders and academics deemed the Western model of governance the only legitimate model. However, countries are at different historical stages and phases of development – politically, economically, and culturally. They are all entitled to seek development paths and governance models that best suit their particular contexts. Take the various approaches towards Covid-19 as an example. China managed to contain the internal spread of the virus within just two months and has been willing to share its experience and practical advice with the world, without claiming it to be the only correct approach. China also speaks highly of the effective actions taken by countries such as South Korea, Singapore, and Japan in accordance with their specific national conditions.

To paraphrase philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "… no leaves in the world are exactly the same". Inclusiveness enriches community and civilisations are more appealing when they're diverse. There is no one-size-fits-all path of development and guarantee for success. The fight against Covid-19 is the top priority for all countries, so it should be fought in a way that fits each country's national conditions. Countries, civilisations, and ethnic groups – in spite of their differences – benefit from communication, mutual learning, and common progress. All parties should respect each other's autonomy and join hands in seeking effective solutions to economic and social development by promoting constructive dialogue and properly handling differences that may arise.

Entering the era of global community does not mean simply a 'world commonwealth'. The word 'community' is an important concept that is widely used in philosophy, political science, and anthropology. Since sociology became an independent discipline in the mid-19th century, community has become a fundamental concept in sociological studies. Typologically speaking, community may refer to an ethnic community, religious community, racial community, and even a scientific community or an artistic community.

The notion of a 'Community of Shared Future for Mankind' transcends the historical theories of community and tries to illustrate the 'notion of belonging' from a long-term perspective, and according to Delanty (2009), is a reflection of a human beings' "longing for meaning, solidarity, and collective actions". This notion is the guiding philosophy of China in handling international affairs. In the fight against Covid-19, China has arguably put this into practice, thus winning the international community precious time to fight the virus. It is possible that in the post-pandemic era, the notion of 'A Community of Shared Future for Mankind' may gain more international support to become the mainstream discourse of the international community.

Clearly, the ideas of 'all under heaven/*tianxia*' and global community, pitched at such an abstract and general level, are very difficult to take exception to. The three broad components – (i) global inclusion and belonging; (ii) optimality; and (iii) a bounded or relational rationality rather than the Pareto optimality that dominates Western thinking – are attractive, and one suspects will grow in global attraction if the liberal model fails to address its own problems. These ideas should become part of the discussion about the reform of international order. Whether they do or not will depend on how deftly they are insinuated into the global conversation and the degree to which the level of China's behaviour and practice will be seen to reflect its rhetorical commitment to *tianxia*.

But we need a reality check on the Chinese language of community. The idea of shared community does not imply shared or pooled sovereignty. In the words of Bill Hayton in his recent book, *The Invention of China*,

> "China's vision of a world order is one in which countries stand on their own and make their way in an international system as individuals. This is clearly a vision in which big countries matter more than small or middle-size ones. It fits neatly with the idea of a regional, or even global, hierarchy – one in which Beijing sits at the top. It is a hierarchy open to all, so long as each knows its place" (see Hayton, 2020).

This reading – perhaps an overly harsh reading – is very much the contemporary US – and the UK – view. They see the gap between China's rhetoric and practice as simply too great to take the project seriously. They see the project as nothing but an attempt to replace a *pax Americana* with a *pax Sinica*. This is not the view of all states. For many, including many European states, the jury will remain out and the verdict will be determined by China's behaviour over the next few years.

The key issue is to what extent the concepts of *tianxia* and a 'community of common destiny' can ever become operable. In some ways, they are depressingly post-modern ideas that privilege individuality over universality. But, if nothing else, they give pause to the automatic superiority of Western views. In the words of Regis Debray, Westerners should no longer see themselves as,

> "omnipotent judges and arbiters of the universal good, but rather as among many options for humanity. One is not superior to others. This is a lesson of humility and lucidity – we in the West are indeed no longer the center of the universe" (Debray, 2020).

Shocks and cooperation: A brake or accelerator on moral solidarity?

In theory, crises or existential shocks should enhance the prospects for cooperation. But in practice, the reverse can be the case and existing trends can simply accelerate. The meta-narrative of the *community of origin*, especially in the hands of the populist politician and reinforced by sentiments of uniqueness, ethnicity, and faith, is invariably a much stronger

motivating idea than the less tangible narrative of a *community of destiny*. As a consequence, moral solidarity is to be found at the level of the state and below, even where inequalities exist and grow within most communities of origin. This is so historically and, as Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen notes, also in recent endeavours to contain the Covid-19 pandemic (Sen, 2020). Solidarity in a *community of destiny*, beyond the level of the state, would appear to be a contemporary chimera. Evidence at the time of writing is that Covid-19 is enhancing existing trends away from cooperation and towards nationalism, nativism, and anti-globalisation.

Either way, Covid-19 will redefine the contemporary era (Pettersson, 2020) by raising serious questions of a global nature that need to be addressed if humanity is going to move in the direction of a more socially just and ecologically sustainable future, rather than retreat into barbarism (see Mair, 2020). If a global pandemic, with no ready-made treatment or cure, does not confirm the interconnectedness of humanity, then what will? Could such a crisis help build something more humane if it furthered the development of a narrative of a *community of destiny*? Or is this simply a bridge too far for humanity?

Solutions to socio-economic, political, and international problems, and their resolution if we are to reverse current trends, are very much predicated on a series of actions that at first sight appear contradictory. At the level of the nation, it is clear that the roll back of the state – after four decades of neglect of the public sector and endeavours to cut back its role in modern developed societies – would appear to be in check. As an editorial in *Foreign Policy* notes, "We are all statists now" (Crabtree, Kaplan, Muggah, Naidoo, O'Neil, Posen, Roth, Schneier, Walt, and Wrage, 2020).

Indeed, governments of long-standing Hayekian persuasion have intervened to secure and mobilise medical and health resources to contain the pandemic in ways even Keynes would have found difficult to conceive of. But more significantly, they have also – as in the US and the UK and other countries such as Germany, Malaysia, and Singapore that have traditionally eschewed fiscal expansion measures – allocated previously unimaginably large amounts of money, multiple trillions, not billions, to bail out businesses and introduce wage-support schemes for workers.

So, if in this changing context, Covid-19 cannot generate a new transformation in how humanity cooperates, can it, at the very least, enable us to set the terms for the forthcoming debate on the role of the state and it relationship to its citizens? Recent events appear to be bringing about a change in our language; specifically the way we talk about the state-market relationship and, we might add, the discourse of cooperation. We can reasonably expect that larger government and increased state capacity will accompany state desires to enhance post-Covid-19 pandemic management.

But this will not be the only agenda. Declining international institutional cooperation in faltering bodies like the WTO and an international trade regime closing in on itself is also seeing the return of industrial policy, tax breaks, and state subsidies to support de-coupling,

're-shoring', and greater government regulatory intervention in markets more generally. Much of this is dressed up as enhancing national security and resilience. In his contribution to this report (box 3 below), Russian academician Alexey Gromyko, recognising the dramatic changes of the last several decades – especially the dissipation of the social consensus in Western European market countries and the break-up of the Soviet Union – makes the case for a new social contract irrespective of where states sit on the traditional state-market political spectrum.

Box 3: The case for a new social contract, Alexey Gromyko

A new social contract is urgently needed although there is no consensus in sight on what that implies. It seems that certain universal values and principles are not a vehicle that can bring humanity together. There are too many differences in opinion on which universal values and principles might bring humanity together. In the wake of hyper-globalisation, many societies and states are suspicious of the idea of universal values. Different countries and peoples need to identify common goals, common threats, and shared responsibility if they are to forge an idea of a new social contract and a new solidarity. History is on the side of this endeavour as we mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two and the creation of the United Nations. In 1945, ideological divides and sharp conflicts in worldviews were much deeper than today. Yet common threats made it possible for different states to come together to lay the basis for relative long-term peace. Against the backdrop of the current challenges – notably international terrorism, climate change, social inequalities, a new arms race, regional wars and numerous frozen conflicts, mushrooming fragile and failed states, and uncontrolled migration – the need for a new solidarity is a clear, obvious, and indispensable way forward.

In theory, there should be no contradiction between national sovereignty, international cooperation, and regional integrations. Moreover, national sovereignty can be strengthened within the framework of regional integration processes. Of course, we speak about sovereignty in the context of a globalised world, where sovereignty of states and individuals cannot enjoy absolute freedom. But interdependence should be seen more as a source of mutual benefit than common loss. National sovereignty and international cooperation are two sides of one coin, while nation-states remain the best mechanism to solve local and inter-state problems. However, transregional and global challenges can be settled only on the basis of transregional and global cooperation. Nation-states and international cooperation cannot replace each other but they can reinforce each other. While human progress is driven both by solidarity and competition, international law, regional and world mechanisms – if they can secure universal recognition – are needed to keep the subtle balance between competition and cooperation, between unbridled market forces and social justice, between technological development and human rights, and between the authority of states and social freedoms.

From this point of view, I offer a series of recommendations:

- *(i) The propagation of destabilising and inevitably provocative concepts, such as a 'clash of civilisations', a 'new bipolarity' or a 'new Cold War', are totally unacceptable, as are exterritorial sanctions and the use of, or threat of, force.*
- *(ii) The World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization should be strengthened and modernised, not undercut.*
- *(iii) The P5 are responsible for reigniting the workings of the Security Council of the UN. The Security Council itself needs reform, including the expansion of the number of permanent members, if even without the veto power for a relatively long period of time.*
- *(iv) The spirit of Elbe should replace an explosive mix of distrust and animosity in relations between Russia and the US.*
- *(v) The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe should get its own charter and activities to be streamlined to motivate member states to work together, not to confront each other.*
- *(vi) The European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union should launch formal negotiations.*
- *(vii) Russia and NATO need to restart active military-to-military contacts as soon as possible.*
- *(viii) A new international push for regional security is needed in the Persian Gulf.*
- *(ix) All military alliances should introduce, if only temporarily, freezes on enlargement.*
- *(x) The traditions of neutrality should be cherished and supported in the face of ongoing militarisation.*

Gromyko raises a core issue. He suggests that seemingly competing desires for national sovereignty and international cooperation are in fact reconcilable. And, while in theory he is undoubtedly correct, much current practice suggests otherwise; especially since the development of the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, much discussion of the subject addressed in this report starts with one hand tied behind its back in the Covid-19 era by assuming that the two positions are indeed incompatible. The next sub section considers this issue.

A brief comment on the implications of Covid-19

Must the search for national resilience in an era of pandemic axiomatically mean that states will cooperate less as they retreat behind their national borders? Trust in government, which diminished in many countries in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, might be gradually returning domestically in the Covid-19 era. On balance that must be a good thing. But it is

not returning trust across the board. The Edelman Trust Barometer (2020) shows while trust in state institutions is not good, it has in fact overtaken trust in business in many countries. But, more than anything else, the Covid-19 crisis shows that enhanced cooperative measures are needed not only across borders but also across business, civil society and other stakeholder groups, and indeed the state. This is especially the case in the solution of issues such as vaccine development.

While Covid-19's containment requires good science, it will also require a better understanding of human behaviour in its wider economic and socio-political contexts as well as finding a more inclusive model of governance. It will require new ideas, based on equality, more universalist public services, greater efficiency, greater equity of access – especially for women and minorities – and ecological sustainability. Covid-19 should and can act as an incentive to do things better. Reform needs to build on the knowledge learned from the pandemic. This wisdom must find voice and be embedded in both strong, applied policy work and institutional frameworks.

The current crisis will eventually pass but there will be others. A successfully managed Covid-19 pandemic is no automatic guarantee of durable institutional reform. This requires political will and is humanity's individual and collective post-crisis challenge. If nothing else, can Covid-19 highlight for us the case for a new eco-social political economy providing basic services to protect us in the future? Is this possible in an era of de-coupling?

Does the trend toward economic de-coupling also amount to the dismantling of the economic architecture of world order? If it is not checked, de-coupling will become increasingly prevalent and the shortening of supply chains will continue to grow; worldwide production and long supply chains will be less connected. A more fragmented world will come into being. But completing this task will be easier said than done. A neat de-coupling of US and Chinese spheres of economic interaction is extremely unlikely. A global population of over 7.5 billion people is too big to exist via national self-sufficiency alone. Moreover, most of humanity does not wish to return to small, closed communities.

The principal agent of this trend is the United States. Shortening supply chains is just one element of its 'self-isolating' under Donald Trump, to use a most apposite and not a little ironic, medical metaphor. But de-coupling and the search for self-reliance is not simply a US obsession. As other states, and especially China in response to the US (see Foroohar, 2020), become increasingly self-focused, their instincts will also be to de-couple and look inward. This approach is built on a misguided 19th-century absolutist understanding of sovereignty located in a 21st-century setting. The golden age of absolute sovereignty that modern day populist leaders appeal to is at best political posturing and at worst a political fiction. We need to recognise how fragile and how fungible the concept of sovereignty articulated in the Westphalian model is in the 21st century. The idea of states as unitary rational and self-contained policy actors has always been a fiction. Sovereignty is frequently compromised, even for the most powerful of states (see Krasner, 1995-6, pp. 116 and 123-139).

In short, the perennial debate about the privilege one gives to the state vis-à-vis the market is seeing the pendulum shift back in the direction of the state after 40 years of neoliberal hegemony. Even in the United States, the move away from a minimalist role for the state is being challenged. Of course, this is predicated on saving capitalism from another crisis, not creating a welfare state, let alone socialism. And almost no one (but see Beeson, 2020) is suggesting that Marx is replacing Hayek. But there is a change of mood; the citizenry in many countries is looking for the state to solve the traumatic problems – epidemiological and economic – generated by Covid-19. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, rather than living under a Hayekian neoliberal hegemony, we are seeing the emergence of strongly competing narratives of how society and the market, both domestically and internationally, should interact and be governed.

Logically, the persistence of Covid-19 – no respecter of borders – negates the idea of trying to wall off the state. National exit strategies will still require international coordination and cooperation to be effective. Thus, an eventual long-term exit strategy from Covid-19 – when the provision of a vaccine is upon us – must be available to *all* countries if the pandemic is not to be a permanent global threat. States will not be able to control the virus in their own country if it is not controlled elsewhere. Absent strengthened global cooperation, our ability to prevent future outbreaks will always be limited. Thinking in nationalist terms will only prolong the crisis. If Covid-19 persists anywhere, it will remain an incipient threat everywhere, regardless of efforts to keep it out. To triumph, a positive narrative of international cooperation will need to recognise not only the renewed importance of governance but also require renewed public trust and civic input to make progress. At the opposite extreme, Covid-19 could end up killing both truth and trust (Kassam, 2020).

Yet, some messages from Covid-19 are positive. Combatting the pandemic has, in some significant instances, seen altruism challenge self-interest. Frontline workers have taken and continue to act with considerable bravery in support of community good. As economist Wendy Carlin (2020), in a manner similar to Bregman, has suggested, this undermines one central tenet of economic theory – that action is driven purely by the primacy of an amoral, self-centred, rational actor operating purely for individual interest. Other economists, such as Skidelsky (2019 and 2020) suggest we must resist the economist's desire to simply mathematise human behaviour. Things that cannot be measured are for most economists merely opinion. But adopting such a position limits our ability to understand the moral and philosophical dimensions of human behaviour. If we acknowledge this – or more precisely, if we can get a majority of professional economists to see the need to acknowledge this – it opens up the possibility of introducing a greater moral ethic; often an important missing ingredient of human socio-economic discourse.

Ironically, what Skidelsky (2019) sees as the universalisation of Western economic thinking comes at the very time when the global reach of Western hegemony appears to be unravelling in both thought and practice. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the context of the challenges facing globalisation. As Nobel Prize Winner Joseph Stiglitz notes,

> "The economic system we construct after this pandemic will have to be less short sighted, more resilient, and more sensitive to the fact that economic globalization has far outpaced political globalization… [C]ountries will have to strive for a better balance between taking advantage of globalization and a necessary degree of self-reliance" (Stiglitz, 2020).

Globalisation, or at least the hyper-globalisation of the neoliberal ideological era, has imploded and some things will never be entirely the same again: international trade will become less open; international travel and tourism will both change; international higher education will change; borders will become tighter; economic growth will be lower; and the world will be less well off. But it will not completely unravel. Much international activity, especially in the trade domain, is too deep-rooted to unravel completely. Supply chains are too complex and the economic and commercial logic that underpins them remains powerful. Globalisation, let us not forget, has lifted more than a billion people out of poverty. "It should be able to survive self-isolation by a single country, even the largest. The rest of the world – and notably China – shows less signs of inwardness towards each other than the USA" (Grenville, 2020). But growing protectionism as a trend can be expected to continue and global trade will continue to fragment as the desire to shorten supply chains continues.

Moreover, moves towards greater national self-sufficiency will not eradicate the need for global problem-solving for those issues that cannot be controlled within national domestic policymaking communities – especially pandemics and climate issues. Reinvestment in global institutions and hard-headed internationalism will surely have to come later, if not sooner. But any future post-Covid-19 reform should not be, and indeed cannot be, simply a national agenda. The crisis may have caught us unaware, but the international community is not without assets. An ability to cooperate and practice multilateral problem-solving has long been one of them. Destabilising shocks such as Covid-19 can be catalysts for reform. But for that to happen, political will and good policymaking are required.

Solidarity must be global if we are to avoid an even more overwhelming and permanent healthcare crisis and a likely prospect of an accompanying economic collapse in the Global South, notably in sub-Saharan Africa (Cliffe, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic in the South will require support from the North. Contrary to the views of nationalist politicians in the North, geographical containment – the walling off of the Global South – is not, nor should it be, a prospective remedy. Neither pandemics nor climate change respect national borders.

In essence, what is required is a rethinking of the role of the state and a new social contract is needed between citizens and their states and between states. As Li and Gromyko have persuasively argued in boxes 2 and 3, this should not be seen simply as a product of Western social and political theory alone. If Covid-19 cannot generate a new transformation in how humanity cooperates, can it at least enable us to set the terms for the forthcoming debate?

The answer to this question must be normative. It must infect the way we talk about the state-market relationship and international cooperation. We must break free from the virulent anti-

statist, neoliberal ideology that predominated in the hyper-globalisation era. But while the appetite for small government and austerity might be diminished, neoliberalism is not simply going quietly into the night. It might be wounded but it is not dead and still has strong support from many of the world's major Anglo-American corporate actors; especially the leaders of what Shoshana Zuboff (2019) has named "Surveillance Capitalism".

The key issue for world order reform and the rebooting of international cooperation is the relationship between the state, or rather the leaders of states, and the structures and practices of international relations. At the core of this relationship is, of course, the sovereignty question and how individual states address it. Can we have multilateralism without some degree of sovereignty-pooling? This gives rise to several other questions. Can we have multilateralism without hegemony? If not unipolar hegemony, can we have successful multilateralism without the United States?

But a principal reason, perhaps *the* principal reason, multilateralism is in decline is because the world's erstwhile hegemon increasingly chooses to privilege national interest – pursued bilaterally and transactionally – over a wider international collective interest pursued multilaterally. This issue is addressed by Professor Simon Reich in part three (box 10). At the same time, other global actors, both state and non-state alike, have yet to prove that they are up to the task of a collective replacement of the international leadership responsibilities previously provided by, or at least attributed to, an erstwhile hegemon.

Any future post-Covid-19 reform cannot be simply a national enterprise. Destabilising shocks of the kind visited on us by Covid-19 can be catalysts for reform. But reform needs political will and good policymaking at both state and international levels; we are unlikely to get one without the other. There is clearly no magic bullet. Reform is not about inventing something new; it is about starting with what we have. In that context, the next part of the report revisits multilateralism as our starting point. It does so without any assumptions of an era of the 'good old days' to which we might return or of dramatic new initiatives on the horizon. It is based simply upon the conviction that reform is and must be possible.

Part 2. Why multilateralism and internationalism still matter

Introduction: Learning, 'unlearning', and 'possibilism' in multilateralism

It is fashionable in some of the more pessimistic analyses of this era of populist nationalism to suggest that the spirit of internationalism is dead and the practices of multilateralism are broken. The days of great power geopolitics in a dog-eat-dog world are back. While this report recognises the influence of such thinking, it resists the sense of inevitability that underpins it. Rather, it starts from an assumption that multilateralism is indeed at an impasse greater than at any time since World War Two and that its future direction is undetermined and subject to the vicissitudes of political thinking and accompanying policy practice. But it also assumes that the good and innovative thinking that reflects Bregman's 'possibilism', accompanied by well-implemented policy, can help us restore at least a degree of collective action decision-making required to address transnational challenges. It is the aim of this section and the specialist contributions in part three to suggest how this might be done.

The last 'big exercise' concluding in multilateral institution-building was the completion of the Uruguay Round that gave us the WTO in 1995. The WTO and some other globally organised arrangements appear to be unravelling. Future solutions to collective action problem-solving are unlikely to be conducted on a global scale. Rather, they will require us to rebuild a more differentiated international architecture if we are to reverse the policy fragmentation and institutional damage that has beset multilateral organisations in recent years. This process will require normative political will as well as analytical thinking.

One initial challenge is to understand the impact of economic and technological advance on multilateralism; and specifically, how over time, the impact of several dramatic trends have outpaced our lagging 20th-century understanding of multilateralism. These trends are:

(i) First, the impact of globalisation, and second, the counter trend of de-globalisation of the international economy;
(ii) The growth of identitarian and nationalist politics;
(iii) The digitalisation of social and political communications at both the national and global levels.

An interplay between domestic and international politics, populist resistance to economic openness, and the rhetorical democratic pretensions of multilateral organisations have witnessed growing populist resistance to the sovereignty-reducing developments in, or at least implications of, global governance. This has brought a halt to what only several decades ago seemed an inexorable growth of multilateral decision-making in an increasingly 'interdependent world'. Both principles and practices in these three domains have undergone, and continue to undergo, dramatic change. Countries appear to be honouring their international commitments less and less and powerful states especially are prone to use the fig leaf of multilateralism to do what they may have done unilaterally, or want to do, anyway.

An equally pressing challenge is to understand how the coronavirus, as the newest global hazard, has also exposed flaws in our current models of international institutional decision-making. At the very least, it has told us that we will need to exhibit more participatory and multifaceted approaches to governance, with due consideration for those requiring social protection and for those at risk from the pandemic in a manner that was not the case in the pre-Covid-19 era. For this to happen, a number of factors must apply.

First and foremost, it requires that great power rivalry is kept in check. The great powers need to be facilitators, not spoilers. Second, those of a liberal persuasion committed to multilateralism must struggle for a new type of what John Ikenberry calls "pragmatic internationalism" (quoted by Tisdall, 2020) to buttress international institutional cooperation and international organisations such as the UN. An onslaught has hit the practices of, and more importantly the principles of, international institutional cooperation in general and multilateral collective action problem-solving in particular, in recent years. This is especially the case in institutions such as the UN and its ancillary organisations – the WHO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, etc. – and economic institutions such as the WTO. Although not on its own, the Trump administration has been at the forefront of this charge. Other institutional set ups, such as the Bretton Woods institutions (the IMF and World Bank), have been under more or less permanent criticism from both the left and right for over three decades.

Third, both destructive and predatory practices towards the international institutions need to be resisted. This is the case whether we talk of the destructive tendencies of the current US administration towards many international organisations; the predatory expansionist tendencies of China, with its desires to gain greater control of the UN and other agencies, as in recent bids to chair the World Intellectual Property Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization; or the spoiler tendencies of a Russia keen to consolidate its own sphere of interest by diminishing the influence of others, notably the US. These practices by major powers need to be resisted, as do the temptations by other states to politicise international organisations. This does not mean that international organisations are not by their very nature spaces of political activity. As places of deliberation, they are inevitably *political* decision-making arenas. But if the world has no appetite for building new international institutions, the existing ones need to be made to work better.

Fourth, we need to re-learn the lessons we have unlearned in recent years. This is not a naive and uncritical re-assertion of the benefits of multilateral institutional cooperation devoid of any sense of their institutional failings or the current inhospitable international environment for international organisations. Rather, it is a recognition of contemporary circumstance. The institutional architecture was mostly established in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. We live in a dramatically different era now. When the post-World War Two institutions were established, it was not an era of globalisation, it was not an era of increasing environmental damage, it was not an era when the Global South was capable of exercising its voice, nor was it an era of digital communication. The post-World War Two institutions were unaware of, let alone designed to address, these factors.

As a consequence, much 20th-century international architecture is not fit for practical purpose for addressing the problems of the 21st century. The 20th-century institutional consensus, such as it was, has passed. A global cooperative endeavour needs to be reformed and, to use a word that did not exist in 1945 when the institutions were born, 'rebooted'. Prior to Covid-19, the prospects for international institutional reform were drifting in the face of both active undermining and passive neglect. Acting on the cliché of 'never waste a crisis', the coronavirus pandemic should offer the opportunity to kick-start a serious reform process that has yet to happen. Reform requires both vision and international leadership that is sorely missing in the age of nationalist-populist strongman leaders, for whom enhancing authoritarian power at home is more attractive then supporting international cooperation abroad.

As a starting point, we would be well served by recalling some first principles if we are not to completely forget why multilateral institutions developed in the second half of the 20th century (on these principles see Keohane, 1989). Let us remind ourselves what multilateral institutions do when they are working well. Without elaboration, multilateral institutions,

- Create and broker norms, ideas, and expectations;
- Lower transaction costs by the provision and sharing of information;
- Reduce uncertainty;
- Help make promises credible;
- Facilitate deal-making;
- Enhance enforcement and compliance of agreed norms and rules;
- Set limits and define choices of and for members;
- Provide institutional venues for dispute resolution.

Set in historical context, this powerful list of benefits became the norm that, to a greater or lesser extent, drove multilateral activity for much of the second half of the 20th century, promoting particular causes or collective programmes of decision-making often formalised in the development of international organisations.[7] It is imperative that we do not unlearn any more of these lessons than we have already done so in the first two decades of the 21st century. As noted, multilateral institutions do not always work optimally and from time to time, as now, they need major reform. We need to reform international agencies that have underpinned globalisation but are increasingly out of step with contemporary practice.

Many of the norms, rules, and practices of international cooperation are still based on common sense and mutual benefit and are likely to remain, even without US leadership. Also, beyond the statist institutions, such norms and principles have also found their way into the modus operandi of many international *non-state* organisations. At the state level, even those states most critical of the current order, such as China, and all the other states that – unlike Russia – have done well out of globalisation, have no interest in seeing the system collapse.

[7] For an excellent secondary discussion of the history and development of multilateralism from the 19th century to the present day see Lavalle (2020).

China's rise over the last decade of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century was – notwithstanding frequent US attempts to head it off – inevitably going to lead, not unreasonably, to China wanting a greater voice in international organisations. This of course has come to pass. China is now the third-most-important member of the financial institutions with seats on the board and officials in senior management of the IMF and the World Bank. Four of fifteen agencies currently have Chinese heads. Along with the US and the EU, it is also the largest contributor to the UN, not to mention its pre-eminent role in significant new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB).

Notwithstanding the current critique of many multilateral international organisations, if they did not exist, we would probably need to invent them. To take the obvious example, we are going to need a revitalised WHO in the post Covid-19 world. Reform, and specifically the re-establishment of its scientific impartiality and credibility, not its abolition, is what is required. Its credibility may have taken a hit in 2020, but no other organisation exists to coordinate health policies across borders. The flow of shared, credible, scientifically sound, and neutrally arbitrated medical information will remain as, if not more, important in the future. But the tribulations of the WHO merely reflect a deeper malaise for the multilateral institution and the negative effects of great power spoiler behaviour.

Covid-19 may have crystallised what we have intuitively known for several decades: that the politicisation of and absence of independent leadership within international organisations can weaken their legitimacy. To be credible in the long term, they must be neutral and impartial; not pawns in the political games of their major members. This argument applies across the board; from the UN and its ancillary organisations, through the Bretton Woods institutions, to the newer institutions including the AIIB.

Some argue this malaise can only be addressed by a new Bretton Woods (Rohinton and Owen, 2020). The original Bretton Woods and GATT were geared to providing an international architecture to ensure financial stability and to govern trade in agriculture, raw materials, manufactures (in the words of the *Economis*t, "things you can drop on your foot"), all of which were amenable, to a greater of lesser extent, to control at the border. Only in the 1970s did services become larger than merchandise trade. By contrast, the new architecture – be it for digital technologies or global pandemics – must reflect new priorities in an era of an under-managed, globalised world in which, at the risk of repetition, neither digital technologies nor environmental degradation or pandemics respect borders.

Covid-19 has demonstrated why digital industry *self-regulation* on the one hand and health industry *national regulation* on the other would be both inadequate and inappropriate (see Coyer and Higgott, 2020); both pandemics and digitalisation are global. In addition to its role in pandemic-monitoring, the growth of digital trade – digitalised supply chains of the kind developed by software companies like Route4Me, at a time when manufacturing supply

chains are receding – is likely to make e-commerce the norm. The major beneficiaries are the US and China, which together account for 90% of all this trade (see Hilbig, 2020).

The pandemic, and the subsequent recovery from it, will continue the acceleration of digitalisation, for which an institutional architecture of global governance does not yet exist, and which needs to be invented. This is a core domain where the demand for an international institutional architecture far exceeds supply. Thus, a new Bretton Woods would need to assist the Global South in participating in this process if it is not simply to be a playground in a bipolar US-China contest that transcends any of the existing global governance norms and institutions. If the Global South is not to fall farther behind, at the very least it must be helped to develop public data infrastructures independent of the big transnational tech communications companies. Put simply,

> "A system dominated by a handful of firms in just two countries could never be trusted to protect the global public good. Addressing a structural vulnerability demands governance, not good will. Given the challenges posed by the new digital infrastructure, it is clear that our only option is to create new global governance institutions" (Rohinton and Owen, 2020).

Beyond digitalisation, support for the Global South more generally is a core concern in any rebooting of the multilateral system. This has to be, and indeed is, at the core of any rethink of the future of the United Nations system, which is not adequately delivering on the provision of its core global public goods: public health, climate action, and sustainable development as set out in the SDGs. This has been recognised by the UN Secretary-General at the UN 75th General Assembly in his call for a 'New Social Contract for the New Era' (Guterres, 2020) and in the UN's 75th Anniversary Declaration (discussed in box 4), and in support of the previous year's call for a new *Alliance for Multilateralism* initiated during the September 2019 UN General Assembly.

This alliance was launched by France and Germany, supported by initially Canada, Mexico, Chile, Singapore, Ghana, and other like-minded countries. At this stage, it is an informal network of countries "… united in their conviction that a rules-based multilateral order is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace and that our common challenges can only be solved through cooperation." Its principal aim is to "… renew the global commitment to stabilise the rules-based international order, uphold its principles and adapt it, where necessary". Its stated aims are as follows:

- To protect and preserve international norms, agreements, and institutions that are under pressure or in peril;
- To pursue a more proactive agenda in policy areas that lack effective governance and where new challenges require collective action;
- To advance reforms, without compromising on key principles and values, in order to make multilateral institutions and the global political and economic order more inclusive and effective in delivering tangible results to citizens around the world;

- To reach out to non-state actors as key stakeholders and partners for the challenges we are facing, from peace and security to climate, human rights, development, and digital transformation (Alliance for Multilateralism, 2020).

Open to all states, the alliance is committed to a rules-based international order as enshrined in the UN Charter and international law. It recognises the importance of being practical as much as rhetorical and is developing reform agendas in key international policy areas such as humanitarian action, climate security, cyber security, women's rights, and gender equality. It is developing measures to secure and enhance pluralistic democracy in the context of global digitalisation.

It is too early to tell the degree to which it is likely to have impact in rebooting multilateral cooperation in these areas, but interestingly the alliance was conceived prior to Covid-19 as a reflection of the growing malaise of multilateralism, with a recognition that any discussion of its development and implementation would need to take place without the participation of the US. This initiative must be distinguished from the 2020, US-driven proposal for an *Alliance of Democracies* focused on building support for the US, contra China. While this may be multilateral in its intention to engage two or more participants, it is not an exercise geared to re-enforcing the multilateral institutional fabric of global problem-solving. As Sven Biscop (2020) notes, this is an alliance *for* the US rather than an alliance *with* the US. The kind of thinking on the part of non-great powers implicit in the *Alliance for Multilateralism* is hopefully not without long-term significance.

The United Nations at 75

The UN's 75th birthday has clearly been a testing time with many people asking about its very future. Does it still matter? How can it matter, one might ask, if it cannot lead on major policy issues and if its structure still reflects the world of 1945 rather than 2020, classically illustrated by the UK and France? With GDP's smaller than India, both still cling to their permanent seats and veto power in the Security Council, which in the words of Ramesh Thakur, a former Vice Rector of the UN university, will surely "perish without reform" (2020).

While today's geopolitical realities should temper our expectations, a failure to reform the UN will represent a major failure of diplomacy for all actors, but most noticeably for the global powers – irrespective of whether they are democratic or authoritarian – that occupy the major places at the table, given that the UN is a community of nations, not a community of democracies, whatever its aspirations. The theme of the 2020 General Assembly was 'The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism'. The meeting saw the signing of an unsurprisingly self-congratulatory view of the UN's unique role. As the Declaration notes,

> "There is no other global organization with the legitimacy, convening power and normative impact as the United Nations. No other global organization gives hope to so many people for a better world and can deliver the future we want" (Declaration on the Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, 2020).

The Declaration is, however, tempered by a dose, albeit an insufficient one, of realism, which acknowledges the growth of,

> "… inequality, poverty, hunger, armed conflicts, terrorism, insecurity, climate change, and pandemics … these … challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism. Multilateralism is not an option but a necessity as we build back better for a more equal, more resilient, and more sustainable world. The United Nations must be at the center of our efforts".

The Declaration labels 2020-30 the "decade of action". But what it offers in terms of aspiration – to protect the planet, to achieve sustainable development, promote peace and prevent conflict, abide by international law and secure justice, privilege the role of women and girls, improve digital cooperation, boost relations with non-state stakeholders, and "upgrade the United Nations", including reform of the Security Council and acting to be prepared for the next pandemic – is not matched by a comparable blueprint for how to meet these goals. The implementation blueprint is left to the Secretary-General to develop.

Box 4: The DOC survey

Cognisant of both the UN's strengths and weaknesses, the DOC has supported the UN-75 Declaration of 21 September by conducting a two-round survey, based on the Delphi Method in order to provide expert opinion on how the UN – and the institutions of global governance more broadly – might best meet current global challenges. A note on the method used in the survey is provided at appendix 3. From the second-iteration of responses we were able to identify four broad sets of issues and arguments for and against them:

1. From intergovernmental cooperation to transnational multi-stakeholder cooperation?

Respondents were asked to reflect on what a truly multi-stakeholder platform for international cooperation might look like and whether governments play too large a role in the decision-making process. Respondents contributed ideas about the potential incorporation of civil society, the private sector, scientists, and other academicians to work more effectively with governments to promote international goods rather than purely national interests. The majority of the respondents shared a belief that a truly multi-stakeholder platform would be necessary and important to speed-up international cooperation.

While respecting the concept of the nation-state, incorporating more actors was thought to provide a base to present a more joined-up world society, exhibiting core common principles and values and enabling what one respondent called a more "humanistic internationalism" to mitigate the anarchic nature of the international system. This new structure should be as transparent as possible and provide clearly defined consultation procedures, working mechanisms, organisational structures, and legal frameworks. To be successful however, it requires a real commitment from member states within a steadfast institutional infrastructure of like-minded organisations and alliances at national and global levels. This, of course, would not only be multi-stakeholder but also, as one respondent noted, a multi-tier process, reflecting different phases in any decision-making process.

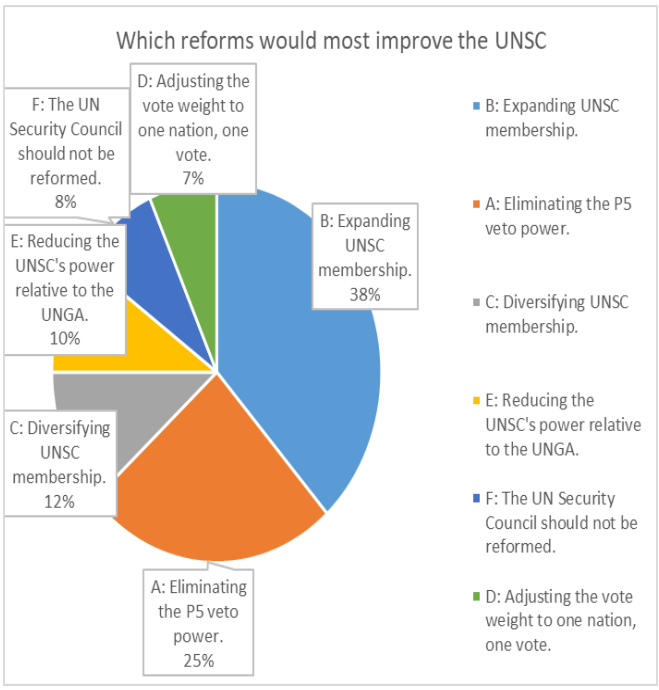
But the prospects for reforming the existing processes at the UN in this way, many respondents recognised, will depend on the a renewed sense of trust developing in the relationship between governments, international organisations, and civil society. Given also that any new structure of international cooperation would need to take into consideration the existing competitive advantages of wealthier states and interest groups, its chances would also depend on the major states responding in an ameliorative way towards weaker members of the organisation – in effect, behaving in a manner different to the past. This reflects the challenges emanating from the relationship between the primacy of state desires for sovereignty over their policymaking processes and the sovereignty-pooling implications implied in collective international decision-making (discussed in part three).

While the majority of respondents were in favour of a multi-stakeholder international system, some expressed concern or identified a number of challenges. Many of these had to do with the existing supremacy of national governments in implementing policies and international agreements and the need to develop methods for non-governmental sectors to increase their voice in international cooperation. One respondent pointed out that only national governments can enforce policy in their respective countries, while another reminded us that national governments remain the best model we have for accountable and transparent decision-making, even as pressures for the representation of other actors in the decision-making process (civil society/private sector/scientific/professional expertise) continue to grow. For this process of incorporation to work, it would need to be issue-based, reflecting the expertise and interests of non-state actors.

The DOC analysis also revealed a range of alternative views, notably, and perhaps surprisingly, that opposed non-governmental entities having more say in international cooperation. It was argued that national governments are already working for the public good and more intensive international cooperation would require non-state entities to be better controlled. In a more nuanced fashion, the argument was advanced that government should be viewed from a dialectical perspective, and each country viewed in the context of their specific relations within their region, instead of applying generalised, universal principles.

2. Reform of the UN Security Council

As can be seen from the pie chart, the two-most-popular responses favoured the expansion of the Security Council (38%) and the elimination of the P5 veto power (25%).



The UN Security Council's role in international cooperation was a major issue brought up in the first round of responses. The second-round question was in two parts – a multiple choice question asking what reforms might improve the UN Security Council and a second question asking respondents to explain how that reform could be implemented.

Most of the respondents shared the opinion that the membership in the UNSC should be enlarged. The number of permanent members with no veto power and non-permanent members could be enlarged by new approaches such as (i) rotation; (ii) membership set against specific, weighted, state-based KPIs; (iii) as a reflection of regional representation. The 'one country-one vote' principle was raised, but not taken into account by most of the respondents as a solution. In general, there were two directions for reform identified: a focus on veto mechanisms and a focus on structural membership. Several experts shared the opinion that the veto could be backed by another veto.

3. Universal principles in international cooperation

The third major question attempted to: (i) Elicit respondents' views on the importance of 'universal principles' such as freedom of expression, human rights, democracy, gender equality, and the degree to which trying to universalise such principles is more divisive than unifying; (ii) Ask how the UN, and international cooperation more broadly, might build a system that is capable of reflecting the values of all states, cultures, and civilisations.

The large majority of respondents shared the opinion that basic human rights are still relevant, not outdated, and that the most important organisation to secure their existence remains the UN. There was also a view that different cultural values should be taken into account, noting that nations and cultures can disagree, provided that the basic value of the importance of human life is ensured.

According to respondents, the discourse on human rights and universalism remains invaluable and upheld by the UN but, in somewhat contradictory fashion, societies should move towards that goal at their own speed. One respondent, Alexey Gromyko, captured the essence of the complexity of underwriting values at the UN.

> *"The principles proclaimed in the UN Charter and in other key UN documents, which are the basis of international law, are sufficient for the ideological foundation of world order. The problem is not a lack of principles or their composition, but the ability of the members of the UN to follow them in real life and to find compromises among themselves. National sovereignty, solidarity, collective actions, a culture of compromise, and a win-win approach is all we need to make the UN a much more successful organisation".*

4. Existing multilateral institutions

Respondents were also asked to suggest which multilateral institutions and international agreements should be defended both in principle and practice? Core international institutions identified included: the WTO, WHO, IMF, OECD, Interpol, UNESCO, UNCTAD, and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, as well as a putative international environmental organisation post-Paris 2015. Key agreements identified included: arms control agreements, the Paris climate agreement, Law of the Sea and Fisheries treaties, Outer Space Treaty, and the Geneva Convention. Regional and supranational organisations included: the EU, ASEAN, AU, EAEU, the Gulf Cooperation Council, OAS; and regional intergovernmental organisations included NATO, the Arctic Council, BRICS, OSCE, Council of Europe, ECOWAS, MERCOSUR, SCO, and G20.

On balance, respondents were keen to see organisations remain. Indeed, the proliferation of multilateral and regional institutions based on member states since the creation of the UN was generally seen as a positive development in the management of international relations. Some of them secured stronger support than others; including, interestingly, the two that are under particular challenge from various quarters at the moment: the WTO and the WHO. But from the European Union through to the Eurasian Union and the Gulf State Cooperation Council, such multilateral initiatives were deemed important to defend. Respondents also thought that the ancillary organs of the United Nations should be further strengthened, not weakened. Strengthening the irreplaceable role of the World Health Organization was deemed critical, especially in the context of the spread of the Covid-19.

Networks and organised hybridity matter

While we need to bring a semblance of restoration back to the multilateralism of the traditional variety found in the discussion of the UN above, state-driven institutional multilateralism alone is no longer – if it ever was – sufficient for the organisation of global cooperation, either before or after Covid-19. Other actors are important in a world of networks and increasingly hybrid organisational interaction that has been in evolution for several decades now (see the discussion in Slaughter, 2017). Much global policymaking, innovation, and capacity-building actually transpires through the interaction of modern networks – both public and private. Networks, increasingly facilitated by digitalisation, change the nature of state power, international relations, and diplomatic practice.

Digital, networked communication changes our approach to international bargaining and strategy from the pre-digital age. It moves us beyond the traditional state-centric multilateral governance structure in the direction of issue-specific or sector-specific governance, with the additional engagement of hybrid multi-sector stakeholders – that is, stakeholders other than states – in the policy process. So, if we are thinking about the changing nature of the autonomy of states as decision-makers in a post Covid-19 age, then we need more precisely defined minimal conditions for multilateral cooperation. These should recognise,

(i) That digitalised network activity and corporate power change the nature of connections in global governance and decision-making;
(ii) That networks do not require government sanction, negative or positive, to function. Indeed, networks – unlike the more traditional institutional hierarchies of the second half of the 20th century – encourage self-organisation;
(iii) That the major governance dilemma is no longer that of *democracy* versus *autocracy*, although that dilemma is becoming more pertinent in an age of populism and pandemic. It is rather a question of *open governance* versus *closed governance* and, we should add, *open* versus *closed* digital spaces in competing centralised systems.

Maintaining the openness of networks requires cooperation amongst a wider range of actors, including not only states and international organisations – the traditional stuff of multilateralism – but also non-state participants from the world of corporations and civil society. In a digital context, these include the major providers – Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, and Google in the US; and Tencent, Huawei, Baidoo, Alibaba, and Weibo in China. It also includes internet users and digital rights defenders, all of whom are stakeholders in global decision-making and will become, along with traditional governmental actors and international organisations, increasingly so in the post-pandemic era.

Internationalism matters: Three proposals to underwrite a reset

Implicit to this report is the unstated distinction between what is an *optimal and desired outcome* on the one hand and what is a *satisficing and achievable outcome* on the other. A spirited internationalism – or what Hal Brands (2020) calls "modest multilateralism" – will need to be re-created as a first step. But this must be an internationalism for the times – hard-headed. Its core components – 'principles', perhaps – would be as follows:

(i) A need to recommit to the importance of, and reform of, international institutions in both principle and practice.

For reasons highlighted above, we are not going anywhere without a new re-commitment. Institutions certainly get captured or compromised at times, as is the case with China and the WHO. But that an institution might be functioning sub-optimally is a reason to reform it, not a reason to get rid of it.

(ii) A need to recommit to saving globalisation from itself. Reform is overdue but needed if it is to continue as the principle motor of growth and wealth-generation.

De-globalisation, already in train, will in all likelihood continue. Trade as a share of global GDP peaked in 2008 and has steadily but clearly declined since then (World Bank data, Trade % of GDP, 2020). States are indeed keen to be less reliant on other states but this is not the end of globalisation. It is not unreasonable for a state to wish to secure essential medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and antibiotics other than from one dominant source country, be it China or wherever else. Production in these and other sensitive areas will sensibly be brought back on shore to the extent possible. But resilience, not absolute self-sufficiency, should be the order of the day. Autarky is neither possible nor desirable in a globally inter-connected world.

To survive, globalisation must at the same time become more ethical and fairer than it has been in its neoliberal heyday if it is not to unravel in a catastrophic way for the global economy. Globalisation's unequal distributive consequences for communities dispossessed by it need to be addressed – what we need is more Keynes and less Hayek in our policy diet for state activity after Covid-19. Policies need to strike a new balance between national security, market efficiency, and social justice. There will be, indeed there is already, an intellectual and political battle between the proponents of protectionism and the proponents of openness. Globalisation needs major reform but its core attributes, those that facilitate economic openness and exchange, must be preserved.

(iii) Most importantly, hard-headed internationalism requires that great power competition between the US and China be compartmentalised and contained.

Both states, of course, have the right to protect their interests in core sectors; but not at the expense of the functioning of the wider world order. For example, it is necessary to contain pandemics and control for environmental damage. It should and must be possible – distrust and scepticism of each other's motives notwithstanding – to identify where their wider interests align. The danger we face is that animosities reach a level that inhibits rational decision-making. Both states must learn to practice *ambiguous tolerance* towards one another if we are to minimise the polarisation and geo-strategic disruption implicit in a new bipolarity, which according to Joe Nye, sees official relations between the US and China at their lowest point in 50 years (see Rachman, 2020). As the *Financial Times* editorial board (2020, October 9) noted, "The US and China must take steps back if history is not to repeat itself". But while the US and China might be the principal parties to the major global contests, they are not the only ones with an interest in them. Other states have to work within, and to combat, the constraints emanating from a new Cold War.

Nature hates a (power) vacuum

These three proposals are predicated on two large assumptions. Firstly, that the US will behave responsibly and ethically and with a modicum of commitment to the wider international global good. Secondly, that the same proviso applies to the other major players – China, India, Russia, and the EU – but especially China. All will need to act multilaterally in the absence of the leadership, or even the support, of the US.

Should we see a second Trump administration in 2021, any renewed attempts to reboot multilateral collective action problem-solving must proceed on an assumption of the absence of, and indeed active hindrance from, the United States. This could be the case in formal institutional settings or informal non-institutional settings and in governmental or multi-stakeholder settings (Digby Parton, 2020).

Indeed, multilateral action absent the US is already on view in some responses to Covid-19. Twenty global leaders – including Emmanuel Macron, Angel Merkel and leaders from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, *but not the US, which boycotted the meeting* – pledged to support an US $8 billion multilateral action package through the WHO to accelerate cooperation in the shared development and globally equitable distribution of a retro-viral coronavirus vaccine (Nebehay and Shields, 2020). The European Commission, in the face of criticism of its failure to coordinate an EU response to Covid-19, has introduced a procurement policy for PPE – minus the UK – that has provided, to the point of surplus provision even, necessary equipment for its 27 members (see Azmanova, 2020).

Similarly, multilateralism still lives at the WTO, notwithstanding the endeavours of the Trump administration to undermine it. The EU, Australia, Canada, Singapore, and twelve other members have established a Multiparty Interim Appeal Arrangement (MPIA) to substitute for the Arbitration Dispute Mechanism rendered inquorate by the refusal of the US to ratify the appointment of judges to the Appellate Body (see Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

The flowering of such non-hegemonic leadership is to be welcomed. But even if the EU and the principal middle powers were to continue to lift their game as cooperative international actors, longer term international cooperation and joined-up global decision-making is not going to occur without the positive input of both the United States and China. US international leadership credibility has progressively diminished since the 2008 financial crisis and especially over the lifetime of the Trump administration. It has, according to the Pew Foundation, plummeted even further as a response to its handling of Covid-19 in 2020 (Wike, Fetterolf, and Mordecai, 2020). And, as Pew also notes, China, while it has not covered itself in glory in its response to Covid-19 either, stills fares better than the US in international opinion. As one observer notes, when it comes to great power leadership "… we live in a G-minus-2" world of poor leadership (Subramanian, 2020).

How long can the world wait for the US to regain its equilibrium and for China to gain a sense of global responsibility, rather than pick away at the rules-based order from within (see Jorgensen, 2020)? Liberals – as opposed to neoliberals – need to speak out for a reformed globalisation. They must, of course, recognise its flaws and that there has been an inequitable imbalance in the relationship between winners and losers from it. But it must be recognised that we are not going to see a recovery of the global economy from its most severe crisis since the depression of the 1930s if it becomes less open, less free, and more nationalist and protectionist, and certainly not if we have to continue waiting for leadership from either of the world's two major powers.

Part 3. Multilateralism and leadership: Some thoughts on rescuing international cooperation

Introduction: From principle to practice in a multilateral reset

Section one of the report identified why certain principles of human behaviour are important for cooperation and why they are now as important beyond the state as within it. As a logical extension, section two of the report specifically identified why multilateralism and internationalism, as both principle and practice, even in a dramatically changing environment, remain fundamental to international cooperation. It argued, notwithstanding the dramatic changes taking place in international relations and global politics, that we must not 'unlearn' many of the principles of international cooperation that we had developed out of the traumas of World War Two. Yet while *principles* are the bedrock of human behaviour, in the absence of sensible *practice*, our ability to advance human wellbeing will inevitably remain limited. Part three attempts to address this lacuna in the relationship between principle and practice.

In this context, the DOC commissioned a series of short insights by prominent thinkers on international governance issues. Unfashionably cosmopolitan in their thinking for this populist-nationalist day and age, they offer us important perspectives on how to reform multilateralism. These boxes can be read as separate stand-alone pieces and they have not been extensively edited but their arguments reinforce the wider argument of the report.

In an interesting and thought-provoking forthcoming policy paper, Inge Kaul (2020) takes the opportunity to respond to the Agenda of the UN's 75th Anniversary Declaration. She captures the essence of the contradiction between the ability of states to exercise sovereign control over their policymaking process on the one hand with the need for collective international cooperation in the face of mounting global challenges on the other; two things that often seem incompatible. Her paper, assuming interdependence rather than incompatibility of these two positions, offers a practical breakdown of how we might make multilateral cooperation more compatible with states' sovereign policymaking capabilities. She makes a plea for the development of the principle of *dual compatibility* of sovereign decision-making with cooperative international cooperation as a way to re-invigorate multilateralism. It is a powerful and compelling exercise of what she calls both "ambition and realism". Her call for equal treatment for individual state inputs into policy deliberations insists on an accompanying realistic respect for individual state positions. As realism attests, however, some states are axiomatically going to have more influence over this process than others.

One and a half cheers for Europe

In box 5, Shada Islam offers us a discussion of the EU's international role. She does so by looking beyond the context of its heavy domestic political agenda. Notwithstanding the EU's many crises, some of them commonly called "existential" (see EU, 2016), she offers an

optimistic trope on the prospect of the EU making a positive contribution to the reform of the multilateral process in the evolving geopolitical struggle. She rightly recognises that the political imperatives of domestic politics are always likely to precede international initiative. Her analysis is, however, more upbeat than is often seen in discussions of the EU. As she says, "… after faltering missteps at the start of the pandemic, Brussels is back in the driving seat, charting a new course, leading the Union towards a better future". Islam has a point, especially when we look at the €750 billion fund created to deal with the effects of the pandemic. Moreover, her argument looks stronger when embedded in a wider context

As a longstanding and thoughtful analyst of the progress of the European project recently and convincingly argued, negative readings of the EU response to Covid-19 are but one example of a "… general tendency among journalists, analysts, diplomats, and politicians to underestimate Europe. For a generation, observers have bet against Europe's future, arguing that it lacks the high growth, centralised political institutions, domestic legitimacy, and hard military tools required to have an effective global presence" (Moravcsik, 2020). But for all its problems, Europe has not failed. Brexit has proved to be an exception, not the trend much anticipated by some. The Euro has not collapsed. Populism, migration, and Eurosceptism, as destabilising as they have been, may have peaked and in any circumstance, they have not rent the EU asunder. Moreover, Europe has not given in to the attempted trade bullying by President Trump and still stands as a champion of multilateral cooperation.

Of course, nothing is written in stone and for the EU's idealists, and its critics, the pace of progress – two steps forward, one step back – is too pedestrian, slow and 'dull'. But again, as Moravcsik demonstrates in a discussion of some key foreign policy issues, such as trade and the global regulation of digitalisation, the EU's approach is every bit as effective as the more ostentations approaches to diplomacy and international relations of strongmen leaders such as Trump and Putin.

Box 5: Europe must drive globalisation's reset, Shada Islam

The Commission, which now describes itself as 'geopolitical', is actively promoting 'we're in charge' slogans in online debates, social media, and through old-fashioned press releases and communiqués. There are multiple meetings among EU leaders and ministers and foreign counterparts, an array of important new initiatives and laudable efforts to revise and adapt earlier budgetary proposals to new, post-Covid-19 realities. Meanwhile Germany, the bloc's most powerful member, took over the EU presidency with a vast and ambitious agenda.

However, the new 'back to business' EU story is only partly true. The EU certainly has a critical role to play in spearheading a European green recovery and, better still, ensuring a scenario based on 'building back better'. But it would be a mistake to believe that European solidarity, already badly weakened by discord over migration, is back.

A recent survey by the European Council on Foreign Relations points to deep public disappointment in the EU's fragmented coronavirus response and European governments' handling of the pandemic. Significantly, in Italy, one of the countries hit first by the virus, 63% said the EU failed its citizens as the pandemic tore through southern Europe and, asked who their most useful ally had been during the darkest days of the crisis, only 4% of Italians cited the EU while 25% said China (Krastev and Leonard, 2020).

Still, a deep reservoir of public goodwill towards the EU continues to exist, with the survey underlining that an overwhelming majority say the pandemic has convinced them that EU governments should cooperate more closely in the face of future external threats, thereby giving support to the idea that EU institutions need to take back control. The real test of EU leadership will depend on its ability to deal not only with European problems but also with the overarching challenge of re-inventing globalisation and multilateralism.

With its unprecedented focus on the climate crisis and an expanding global conversation on the ethics and rules for IT and AI, the EU has already started placing the building blocks of a new global order. But during the lockdowns, too many EU policymakers were declaring the death of globalisation, conveniently forgetting that the EU itself is the child of cross-border cooperation and the biggest beneficiary and standard-bearer of multilateralism. As countries struggle to find the right tools for a rapid economic recovery, to create jobs, and come to the aid of the most vulnerable, the world needs wise and inclusive economic governance. Here are some options that the EU should explore:

First, the EU should unambiguously make clear that it believes in an inclusive rules-based multilateral order and illustrate this by building a more powerful global partnership on health. This means spearheading the drive to give the World Health Organization (WHO) much-needed money and power to impose and monitor government health policies and ensure greater global exchange of information on health emergencies, epidemics, and pandemics. International cooperation – including the collaborative hunt for a Covid-19 vaccine – should be a priority. As such, the EU-led global vaccine summit of June 2020 was important, as was the call from EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to ensure potential coronavirus vaccines are equally available to all nations.

Second, the EU should continue to press for an international financial-humanitarian rescue plan to help countries that do not have the national capacity, the money, or the medical personnel to deal with Covid-19 and other similar emergencies. In developing countries, it is the daily wage earners who are being hit hardest and will continue to suffer for years to come in the age of the gig economy. Such measures are especially needed given the lukewarm response to the recent G20 blanket debt relief deal from both private lenders and African creditor nations, who fear such help adversely affecting their future credit ratings and access to international private finance. Encouragingly, China has promised to cancel debt for relevant African countries in the form of interest-free government loans that are due to mature at the end of 2020. This is importance, since Africa owes China approximately $145 billion dollars, making the country its biggest creditor.

Third, the EU should take the much needed, albeit difficult, decision to jettison the G7. Once upon a time, the G7 mattered. Set up in the 1970s when the US, Italy, Japan, Canada, France, Germany, and the UK dominated the world economy, the G7 shaped and led the agenda. In 1998, when Russia joined – only to be kicked out 15 years later over its annexation of Crimea – Asia was in financial and economic meltdown. Times have changed. The G7 is a relic of the past, clueless, powerless, and out of touch with the requirements of a rapidly changing and now very disrupted world. Europe must be brave enough to pull the plug.

Fourth, as a consequence of recommendation three, the EU should give the G20 some much needed oomph. The global nature of the current crisis and the search for innovative ways to accelerate recovery require both guidance and leadership of old and new economic powers. As it stands today, the G20 is not fit for purpose. Countries in the group have different interests, diverging politics, and are at different levels of development. But they are linked by the common quest for a quick economic rebound. Lacking enforcement tools, the G20 cannot overhaul policies of sovereign nations, but collective peer pressure and some public chiding can promote greater alignment. A G20 permanent secretariat could help achieve this.

Fifth, the EU should take a more proactive approach to dealing with regional organisations. Covid-19 is spurring regionalism, boosting the role and heft of regional blocs. Asian nations – as in Europe – have always traded more with each other than with others. Covid-19 has accelerated that shift. Also, since the recovery and reopening are likely to be incremental and regional, with governments implementing stimulus policies to boost domestic consumption and near-shoring supply chains, regional blocs will become ever more important.

Sixth, the EU should invest more energy and effort in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) as a proactive geopolitical tool. Established in 1996, ASEM brings together 53 key Asian and European players who meet regularly in different formats – summits, ministerials, and at the expert-level – to discuss issues as diverse as foreign policy, security, trade, and religion. Sadly, ASEM has underperformed over the years; although recent conversations on connectivity have given it enhanced relevance.

ASEM leaders should have a real conversation on its 2020 summit theme of 'strengthening multilateralism for shared growth', sending out a strong message on re-crafting global governance rules to reflect new realities. These include the growing popularity and need for plurilateral deals to tackle divisive issues like e-commerce and worker mobility, especially for health workers. ASEM's longstanding acceptance of 'issue-based leadership' offers another way forward at times when consensus is difficult to find.

To achieve this and more, European leaders will have to wean themselves off their current political, security, and economic over-dependence on the United States. As they rebuild European solidarity and speed up discussions on boosting the EU's 'strategic autonomy', the long-overdue process of rebalancing EU-US relations has, in fact, already begun.

In a similarly positive vein to Shada Islam, and taking a cue from analysts like Moravcsik, Jean-Christophe Bas in box 6 looks beyond the contemporary and far-reaching criticism of the EU governance model, from both within the EU and beyond. Instead, he offers us the brave assertion that in the search for greater and better international cooperation, the world actually has much to learn from the evolution of the EU as a practical system of governance. Focusing on the ability of the European Council and the European Commission to develop, over time, a sophisticated system of compromises in governing, he suggests that we should explore elements of this model for global cooperation and we should do this via the establishment of a Global Commission.

Box 6: The 'global common interest': The missing piece in the international architecture, Jean-Christophe Bas

The European model

Whatever judgement one makes about the successes and the failures of the EU and the European project since its creation in the 1950s, a consensus exists that the governance structure put in place by the founders was innovative, effective, and resilient; and for its limitations, the most advanced experiment in supra-national governance to date.

The EU represents some exceptional sovereignty-pooling accomplishments, as in the creation of a single currency; the adoption of a common policy on international trade; the creation of one of the world's biggest single markets; and the ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate, all of which would have been improbable, indeed unlikely, without an effective governance mechanism.

These innovations in governance were, at their inception, the result of the visionary engineer of the European project, Jean Monnet, who anticipated the need to reconcile the 'irreconcilable': on one hand, the interests of member states, represented now by the Council of the European Union; on the other, the general interest of the EU, represented by the European Commission. The result: the executive branch of the EU is split between two bodies with no choice other than to work together and to compromise, in order to move the European project forward, with the Commission responsible for proposing legislation.

This may seem complicated. Sixty years after the creation of the EU, most European citizens still ignore the division of labour and power between the Commission and the Council. It has not always worked well. Like any institution, its strength depends on its leadership. Walter Hallstein and Jacques Delors struck the right balance between the Council and the European Commission, while some other Commission presidents have been unable to resist the blocking pressure of the Council. But few of the accomplishments of the EU would have been possible without this regular institutional compromise.

The Commission, comprised of powerful individuals – in most cases, senior political appointments made with the approval of the Parliament – is independent of the will of member states. Commissioners are bound by their oath of office to represent the general interest of the EU as a whole, not their home state. A strong Commission is a guarantee for a healthy and productive balance of power at the helm of the EU. It makes possible the emergence of bold initiatives that would not come from the member states, mandated to protect the interests of their own country rather than advance a wider European perspective.

Can the world learn from this model?

To what extent can it be useful in the reinvention of the wider international institutional architecture? Could the development of a similar body tackle and resolve global challenges – and foster development, peace, and human dignity – more effectively than is currently the case? Current international, intergovernmental organisations – the UN and its agencies and the global financial and trade bodies like the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO – are almost entirely 'in the hands of' member states, which consider most decisions or initiatives of these institutions through the lens of national interest rather than a 'global common interest'. The presidents or the secretaries-general of the major international organisations are limited in their influence by processes and practices whereby the member states normally have the last word.

The creation of a powerful body – let's call it a Global Commission – mandated to promote the 'global common interest', to initiate measures corresponding to that interest, i.e., the interests of the people and the planet, and to forge a sense of common belonging based on the model of the European Commission could, perhaps, trigger a radically different balance of power and dynamic in the work of the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions. This could be a particularly powerful device at a time of growing fragmentation and heterogeneity among member states and the decline of the spirit and vision that prevailed in the aftermath of World War Two, when these institutions were initially created. We observe the same phenomenon at the international and also the EU level. The increasing heterogeneity among Member States is becoming a serious obstacle to international cooperation and the capacity to promote the global common interest.

The Global Commission could act as part compliment, part counterweight, to the Security Council. Its task would be to come up with a narrative of a 'global common interest'. The Global Commission would also develop a vision and reflect on what brings us together today as one single humanity – what part one of this report calls a 'community of destiny'. The Commission would have to tackle the seemingly intractable issues of whether humanity shares universal values, or only common interests, in fighting common threats such as pandemics, terrorism, and climate change. Rather than shared values, should we talk today about a shared responsibility to unify peoples? Can we – and if so how might we – effectively combine the preservation of our cultures and state sovereignty with the need for the further transnational imperative to handle global risks and challenges cooperatively?

How to revitalise people's trust and support in transnational cooperation and to counter the forces of populism and nationalism remains a core question. How can we hold international institutions more accountable and make them more transparent, effective, and representative? How can we unlock the voice and efforts of women, young people, and grassroots movements engaged in promoting cooperation and a more equitable world? Who should, and can realistically be, the drivers of this revival?

The Global Commission would indeed open a 'Pandora's box' by organising serious reflection geared towards establishing recommendations on universal values, which are increasingly challenged by most non-Western countries and cultures and which, by extension, constitute an obstacle to the contemporary legitimacy of most international institutions. The denial of this challenge to liberal universalism in most Western countries is contributing to a growing frustration and resentment in many parts of the world.

We should listen to Kishore Mahbubani's assertion that "The West should heed Napoleon's advice and let China sleep" (2020). As he says "… we must acknowledge that a tsunami of de-Westernisation is underway. Even more significantly, when Mr Erdogan announces the conversion of the Hagia Sophia to a mosque and Mr Modi resurrects a long-lost Hindu temple on a contested religious site, they are signaling a desire to return to pre-western cultural roots". Similarly, we should pay attention to statements by leaders from emerging countries, such as Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India:

> *"we are rightly recognizing the importance of tradition, culture and faith as key variables in global affairs. That in itself is an evolution from the mere sweeping and less granular, I should say condescending postulates of globalism …since a significant segment of nationalisms have occurred outside the Western world , there is inevitably a civilizational aspect to this rebalancing. After all, it means the political revival of societies who were victimized for decades if not centuries, by the West…Key institutions especially the United Nations are visibly anachronistic. Their thinking and decision making are clearly not reflective of modern reality…" (6th India Ideas Conclave, Gujarat February 28, 2020).*

Indeed, as the 2019 Rhodes Forum report made clear (DOC Research Institute, 2019), the concept of the civilisation state in the emerging world must be taken into account when explaining the dynamics international relations in the 21st century.

As Gideon Rachman notes,

> *"… the 19th century popularized the idea of the 'nation state'. The 21st could be the century of the 'civilization state'. A civilization state is a country that claims to represent not just a historic territory or a particular language or ethnic group, but a distinctive civilization…The notion of the civilization state has distinctly illiberal implications. It implies that attempts to define universal human rights or common democratic standards are wrong-headed, since each civilization needs political institutions that reflect its own unique culture. The idea of a civilization state is also exclusive. Minority groups and migrants may never fit in because they are not part of the core civilization" (2019).*

The creation of a body dedicated to the promotion of the global common interest, to developing a global common vision, and common global policy would greatly help to provide structure and meaning to the profound bottom-up aspirations for greater international cooperation. Interestingly and ironically, at the moment we are witnessing a growing heterogeneity among states, governments, and their leaders, the reality is that across the world, people are remarkably unified in their fears and hopes for the future. The survey and report, 'The future we want, the United Nations we need', produced by the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser by way Commemoration of the UN's 75th Anniversary, shows that 87% of respondents believe international cooperation is very important or essential for addressing global challenges. It is high time that this voice and aspiration can be heard on the international stage and translate into policy.

In similar vein, a summer 2020 Pew Research Center survey (Bell et al., 2020) found that many people believe greater global cooperation could have reduced the human toll from Covid-19. The same poll reveals strong support for taking the interests of other countries into account, even if this requires compromise*. These findings are in line with a pre-coronavirus 2019 Pew Research Center survey in 12 of the same 14 countries that showed robust public support for the idea of nations cooperating, rather than competing, on the world stage.*

The preceding discussion has to be at the core of future normative thinking about the international institutional architecture. But it begs a number of practical questions that a Global Commission would need to address at the outset, notably: How to make such a bold initiative acceptable to states not keen to cede 'territory'? What should be the profile of the members of the Global Commission to guarantee their views would be strong enough to resist the pressure of member states to impose their national, as opposed to communal, interests? How should the Commission be selected to guarantee appropriate representation, independence, and capacity? What should be the competence attributed to a Global Commission? Questions and obstacles are plentiful, but that shouldn't prevent further reflection on the idea and how it might contribute to the development of a common vision for humanity that builds peoples' trust in, and commitment to, a reformed international architecture.

In box 7, and by way of a reality check, Obiageli Ezekwesili, identifying the growing importance of Africa as a player in international relations, makes an alternative but powerful argument that Europe's influence is sub-optimal, at best, if it fails to mobilise a coalition of the willing in which Africa is a *co-equal partner* with the EU.

***Box 7: Towards a new multilateral order: Why Europe needs Africa*, Obiageli Ezekwesili**

Europe presents itself as Africa's closest historical partner, even if these days countries are sometimes embarrassed by the blemishes of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. Most unforgettable for Africans are the arbitrary colonial borders that European powers used to ruthlessly divide the continent among themselves at the Berlin Conference of 1884. As cooperation began to grow following the independence of the majority of African countries from the 1960s, Europe began decades of humanitarian and development aid, which some of its leading policymakers and academics have showcased as evidence that it was assuaging the blot of the past. Yet even in 2020, Europe is still trapped in the paternalistic failure to realise how important Africa is for its future, choosing instead to pursue a migration-centred policy toward its African neighbours.

Nothing shows Europe's failure to evolve in the way it perceives Africa and the future of both continents than the misguided migration policy of 'keep-Africans-at-home-and-away-from-Europe-by-all-means-possible'. Some countries go to the extent of offering 'additional aid' solely for the purpose of stopping citizens from entering Europe. In what amounts to a contradiction and ostensibly a bid by Europeans to assert post-colonial influence, they constantly fret over the boisterous courting of Africa by China. While Africa must be extremely cautious of China and its ways, in no way does Europe have a moral handle on what a continent to which it has accorded the least importance should or should not do with others. African countries owe their citizens the responsibility to prioritise national interest strategically in all bilateral or multilateral relations.

Regardless of the realities of the insalubrious history of Europe in Africa, there are still extraordinarily strong reasons now, more than ever, for the two continents to cooperate on a basis of a mutuality of interest. With multilateralism collapsing and the world facing another round of great power competition – this time between the United States and China, with Russia standing alongside China – all countries and continents must re-evaluate their stature and leverage. That the US and China are ignoring Europe and the rest of the world in their friction-laden contest is the clearest signal to Brussels and all European capitals that the universal values that once underpinned the multilateral order are under threat of replacement by force majeure, be it American or Chinese, with no room for a collectively negotiated path shaped by consensus.

In this new grab for global primacy, without globally effective moderating rules, Europe is as much at risk and needs Africa now more than it realises. But it is not just Europe that needs Africa to help shape the new global rules of cooperation and collaboration for the 21st century. The whole world needs Africa.

There is, after all, no other continent better positioned than Africa to present the world with the most relevant depth and breadth of issues requiring profound adjustment and innovation in the framing of new multilateral approaches for the future.

The future that powerful countries – and the global institutions they dominated – failed to boldly embrace is finally now with us. But there is neither the effective collective political leadership nor the institutions available to handle it. This applies whether we speak of the future of globalisation; the future of democracy; the future of society; the future of women; the future of national and global security; the future of the climate; the future of capitalism; the future of work; the future of trade; the future of the SDGs; the future of managing risks and uncertainty, especially global pandemics; or the future of technology and the human race. One thing is certain, and it is that unprecedented changes must be made to how our world currently works. And at a time like this, the world needs global cooperation and collaboration more than competition for monopolistic dominance of a planet under threat.

What the world needs as it adjusts to the radical changes in economic structures, geopolitics, and security generated by the revolution of disruptive technology, is not a diminished Europe casting confused glances at China and America. In truth, a diminished Europe that lacks the counterbalancing weight to restrain and contain the competition of today's duopolistic great powers will, sooner rather than later, expose the world to the highest levels of political, security, and economic risk. The world needs a Europe that can mobilise collective action in the defence of universal values. The world needs a third way that encapsulates the collectively agreed values that symbolise the shared humanity that must be preserved regardless of the push and pull of overpowering technologies.

The catch, however, is that Europe – unlike in the periods of the 19th and 20th centuries, when it bestrode the earth, dominating its neighbouring continent with the power of the gun and other forms of coercion – is grappling with and confused by its rapidly declining global influence. In the 'new and next normal', the current level of influence that Europe has will not on its own deliver a détente between China and the United States. Nor will Europe succeed by forging a 'coalition of the willing' without Africa.

An Africa-Europe led coalition is best positioned to amalgamate their unique influences and quickly gain the level of legitimacy needed to innovate and present the outlines of a new multilateral order with the accompanying global norms that will satisfy the demands of those currently excluded. The cumulative social capital generated by citizens across the countries of the world could generate collective power in a manner never before imagined.

Europe needs Africa as a mutual ally to legitimise its strategy. Europe and the world need an Africa that will bring the squabbling great powers and others to the table and sit as a strong and equal partner to help design a third way. How quickly can Europe grasp how much it needs to collaborate with Africa to innovate a new multilateral order? How willing is Europe to reimagine what a partnership of equals with Africa can produce, or would it rather hold on to its inglorious past and be consigned to a history of irrelevance?

In box 8, Huiyao Wang offers a deft and diplomatic insight into the need for a system of reform that moves us away from the erstwhile US unipolar moment towards an era of multilateralism.

Box 8: Multilateralism: The future path to reform global governance, Huiyao Wang

2020 is the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. But 2020 has also seen Covid-19 claim more than a million lives worldwide. The WHO, a major UN body, has struggled to forge close inter-governmental cooperation to cope with the pandemic. Public dissatisfaction with the UN system, as well as what I see as the concept behind the UN – global governance – has grown. After its past successes in supporting a stable world order and its dedication to poverty reduction and public health, the UN seems less capable of addressing current crises or challenges posed by growing unilateralism. Institutional reform of the mechanisms of global governance to enhance multilateralism at both government and public levels is needed.

The UN, after the ill-fated experiment of the League of Nations, represents the most substantial institutional effort at global governance to date. The rhetorical aspirations of global governance were captured in the motto of the 2008 Beijing Olympics: 'One World, One Dream' – a dream for human society to work together for the greater good. The role of the G20 in dealing with the financial crisis of 2008 is perhaps the best practical example of this we have seen.

Our current system for global governance can be broadly divided into three categories. The first category is the UN system, responsible for global security and societal issues, human rights, the environment, economic cooperation, and poverty reduction. The second group of institutions are those responsible for world financial and trade issues – the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO. The remaining group of international institutions and mechanisms belong to the third category, a mosaic of organisations that aspire to fill gaps not covered by the first two categories. These include for example the G20, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as well as security alliances such as NATO.

One characteristic of the current system is that it is highly decentralised. Although the US and the West have a strong say in global governance, they no longer dominate the whole system. Global governance is not so much 'global government' as a series of platforms for public debate and argument, with different sides working through their differences to achieve consensus and, hopefully, putting this consensus into practice. Global governance also shapes universal norms and rules that sovereign countries must respect and observe them, at least on paper. This decentralised, consensus-driven model is a major achievement, in contrast to the preceding millennia, when 'might is right' was generally the prevailing rule of international order. This Darwinian struggle between nations and peoples has since been substituted with a system that, in theory at least, aims to be fair, equal, and benign, mirroring the moral and cultural progress of humanity. Unfortunately, these aspirations for a 'fair and just' system are undermined by underlying tensions and contradictions.

As a product of a particular time and historical context, our global governance system is based on a philosophy that has gradually become more and more outdated. The founding of the United Nations can be traced back to the Atlantic Charter in 1941, a proclamation made at the will of great powers. The original purpose of the charter was to build an international alliance against the Axis powers. Following this, the alliance slowly morphed into the current model, a top-down system to maintain stability in security and the global economy and deal with humanitarian crises. But the post-war consensus retained a hierarchical structure through which dominant powers maintained a more or less stable bipolar balance of power until the disintegration of the Soviet Union left the US as the sole superpower and leader of a unipolar global order.

In addition, the ageing UN system has encountered new global challenges which it was not designed to handle at its inception – the emergence of the digital economy, climate change, and the rise of nationalism and populism – and for which the international community has yet to develop viable solutions. Some leading countries, notably the US, have chosen to dodge problems by withdrawing their membership from some international institutions. The global financial crisis in 2008 and our current public health crisis in 2020 show that the current mechanisms of global governance are unable to address 21st-century problems and are thus in need of change and reform.

In the last few decades, the UN and other relevant global governance institutions have repeatedly wasted time trying to strike bargains between various interests. They have become less decisive on various emerging issues. These weaknesses render the international community unable to address the 2020 pandemic and other major crises. So, how can global governance be reformed to overcome the deficiencies outlined above? There are two key points regarding efficiency and responsibility respectively.

First, the international community should take measures to increase efficiency to find timely solutions to emerging problems. Endless discussion between different interests should give way to immediate actions. Secondly, major powers need to address problems instead of shirking responsibilities. In 2012, China's leadership proposed the concept of a 'Community of Shared Future for Mankind', stressing that each country must fulfil common but differentiated responsibilities to jointly work for a better future. I see this as a workable alternative for the future. The path that can lead to this new model of global governance is to be found in a multilateralism possessing two layers:

(i) The first layer is state-to-state diplomacy. Sovereign countries should interact and communicate equally through official channels and play crucial roles in building substantive frameworks of cooperation, i.e., reform of the UN Security Council and reconfiguration of voting rights in the IMF.

(ii) *The second layer is an interactive platform comprising public diplomacy, civil society, enterprises, and other voices from society to provide reference and advice to global institutions. Voices from the level of civil society can play a key role to buffer tensions among nation-states.*

For instance, as a think tank, the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) has proposed the establishment of an international digital alliance, the Digital 20 – a civil conference similar to the Youth 20 and Business 20 attached to the G20 – as a union of cross-border digital organisations. CCG has also proposed the establishment of an Alliance of Global Talent Organizations as a new platform for cooperation on global talent movement and circulation. The Paris Peace Forum accepted this proposal. Both proposals aim to draw on practical experience and knowledge to strengthen global governance aligned with new social agendas worldwide. NGOs may also help in restructuring international relations by proposing new cooperative mechanisms. We should encourage greater participation in the process of re-imagining global governance, especially at a time of widespread dysfunction. Only through comprehensive dialogue and fruitful interaction can we avoid misunderstanding and conflict.

It is unlikely that we will be able to complete the reform of global governance in a short time, since the path we choose is gradual reform rather than radical reconstruction. But our present moment presents a rare opportunity for reform. The ongoing structural change in the international power structure has left a vacuum to fill. The rise and fall of great powers may reverse earlier trends towards unipolarity in favour of a new balance of powers and a multipolar world. At this critical moment, the responsibility to seek a better solution rests in the hands of every participant and individual.

In box 9 N. Selin Şenocak looks at the current state of global governance through Eurasian lenses.

***Box 9: Disruption of the new world order in the Covid-19 era: A Eurasian perspective*, N. Selin Şenocak**

The arrival of Covid-19 will see changes in the ideological practices that have shaped world order for more than three decades. Covid-19 has devastated global governance and globalisation, disrupting the world and causing a drift in its structures. Thomas Friedman (2020) splits world history in two; a world before the pandemic and a world after with Covid-19 as the pivot. And we are witnessing the emergence of a new world in which global governance, in particular the governance of public health, is destabilised. The cooperation and consensus among the great powers to secure the global commons, necessary to support a world with a functioning system of governance on a global scale, seems to be fading and weakening.

The phenomenon was, of course, present before Covid-19, however the pandemic has been a catalyst that has deepened the fragmentation and lawlessness of global governance. It is now becoming evident that global governance is under siege. Similarly, globalisation seems to be paralysed and even trending back to the era that preceded it. Countries are confined within borders that are becoming sealed, with no predictable end to the pandemic in sight. The world trading system has been challenged by trade wars, the most devastating of which involves China and the US and the crisis of the WTO's dispute settlement capability, due to the loss of the members of its Appellate Body.

Covid-19 and the necessary measures that have been taken to combat it have further disrupted trade and commerce, especially global supply chains and the free movement of people, causing negative growth in the global economy. The IMF estimates that global economic performace in 2020 will be minus 3% or worse. Fortunately, during the pandemic, the global food chain has remained intact. But a world where the unimpeded flow of goods, people, and capital was the order of the day no longer exists. It is an illusion to think that the end of the pandemic will restore global supply chains to their pre-Covid-19 state. Only the flow of information continues relatively unimpeded.

The global governance system, particularly the global public health system, the WHO and its crisis management, has suffered further shocks as it has been caught in the growing anarchy in the relationship between the pandemic and the resurgence of US unilateralism. Similarly, multilateralism has been the victim of the anarchy in the architecture of global governance brought about by the pandemic. Governments have had no choice but to institute drastic measures against Covid-19 to prevent its rapid spread, including closures and sealed borders. There has not been sufficient consultation and coordination at the global level on the timing, duration, and extent of these actions taken by countries and the WHO has not been fully utilised to fulfil its role.

Unilateral actions or inactions may represent natural, impulsive responses to the Covid-19 crisis, but they should be understood in their context. Multilateralism as a principle of global governance has been greatly weakened by Covid-19, which has changed our way of life. The sovereignty-based political and economic order is likely to prevail over multilateralism.

According to Ian Bremmer (2020), the mutation of Covid-19 will be marked by de-globalisation. The logistical challenges highlighted above suggest that just-in-time global supply chains will be used less and less. However, growing economic difficulties, the inevitable rise in nationalism, and 'looking- inward' will prompt companies to relocate their activities in ways that favour national and regional supply chains. Public debt will explode, causing financial difficulty around the world. This will have inevitable political consequences for fragile governments. Changes of power will be inevitable. These actions represent impulsive responses to the Covid-19 crisis. The question remains as to what their impact on global governance will be, in particular on health governance at the global level. The EU, which was a beacon of world governance, is almost certain to encounter more difficulties in its regional organisation.

The gradual disintegration of multilateralism on a global scale and the increased fragmentation and anarchy of global governance is a harbinger of a more anarchic world, where the laws of the jungle once again prevail. Unilateralism fuelled by populism and nationalism was on the rise long before the pandemic. Covid-19 has given a new impetus to its progression. The current crisis in the EU, the US, and ultra-nationalist tendencies in many countries challenge the system of global governance, increasing fragmentation and chaos.

The pandemic has triggered an awareness in all countries of the presence of unconventional security threats, such as a global public health crisis, or the energy security crisis precipitated by the sharp drop in oil prices in recent months. These threats are now high on the list of challenges facing the world, overtaking military conflicts and other traditional threats. Recent conflicts and tensions in the Mediterranean Sea are indices of this newly fragmented world order. Covid-19 has also highlighted the politicisation of, and absence of, independent leadership and weakened the legitimacy of some international organisations. For their credibility and efficiency, they must be neutral and impartial, not pawns in the political games of their major members.

The US and Europe are the major victims of Covid-19 in both real, economic, and diplomatic terms. Covid-19 has diminished trust in America as a global leader. EU solidarity has failed in this crisis as many member countries have adopted the policy of 'chacun pour soi'. Both the US and China have suffered blows to their international standing and prestige arising from Covid-19; the US for its incompetence in handling the virus and China for its initial cover-up and sub-optimal assistance.

China's international outreach switched remarkably quickly from self-advertising 'mask diplomacy' to 'wolf-warrior diplomacy', shedding decades of low-key diplomatic practices (Popescu, 2020). However, China has lost credibility due to the concealment of information. All these diplomatic efforts will not easily overturn long-standing suspicions, especially in the US and in Western Europe.

Dominique Moisi (2020), speaking of Turkey, Russia, and China, argues that "… while the comparison between these three countries seems artificial they are … in their own way, 'predators' that must be contained". Moisi sees rapprochement and the interconnection of these countries, sometimes in conflict but always united in their attacks on the West, which he also sees as a danger for Western liberal democracy. Some experts point to the intimidation strategy of these three countries as a policy of force for taking control of world governance. The recent tensions in the Mediterranean regions and the Black Sea region are a sign of this new strategy, seen as geopolitical skirmish (Ibid).

This new unconventional and unpredictable Eurasian alliance formed by ancient great civilisations and empires is preparing to fill the void in political interference of the Western world. World governance is likely to change its hemisphere and without any democratic consensus, the world could end up in chaos. The international community should redefine its priorities to overcome these two types of threat. The sooner this process is initiated, the better our chances of survival in the emerging world. The global governance deficit is dangerously widening as the United States withdraws from the management of global public goods. We can observe that the rules-based system of global governance, starting from the United Nations, is crumbling. Can we prevent it from sinking into a downward spiral?

In a world where digital transformation and artificial intelligence have become a modus vivendi, a new social contract adapted to the challenges and needs of today's world remain essential to facing the threats and disorders of tomorrow.

The restructuring of the United Nations, adapted to the needs and challenges of the 21st century, is a necessity for its survival. The United Nations must lighten its red tape and transform itself into a much more democratic and transparent structure. Power imbalances within international institutions must also be corrected to recognise the needs and rights of the two-thirds of the world's population who reside in the southern hemisphere. The world must no longer be at the mercy of five countries that decide the future. A new order, as well a new United Nations, should become multipolar, considering contributions from all countries, all major cultures, and all civilisations – this would represent 'common sense' for global governance.

In box 10 Simon Reich makes a convincing case that the outcome of the November 2020 US presidential election remains the elephant in the room for any meaningful conversation on how to breathe new life into multilateralism.

Box 10: The elephant in the room: Multilateralism, leadership, and a US presidential election, Simon Reich

The significance of domestic political leadership can often get lost within a framework of global politics. But its importance is often magnified when it comes to the influence of American politics as an outsized power. Historically, American insistence on an entitled position of institutional leadership may have often frustrated its allies, strained relations with 'frenemies', and amplified areas of conflict with its proverbial enemies. But as the last four years have keenly demonstrated, an abandonment of that role, coupled with an, at times, purposive American undermining of the International Liberal Order, has proved chaotic in attempting to deal with a variety of collective action issues, spanning from trade and commerce to climate change and pandemics.

This is not to assert that the United States is an 'indispensable power' in the self-aggrandising manner in which the term is often invoked by political leaders such as Madeleine Albright. But what the Trump administration's behaviour has made abundantly clear is that efforts at multilateral collaboration in the absence of American support are deeply problematic. The United States provides an apt illustration of the adage, 'can't live with them, can't live without them'.

Yet the November 2020 American presidential election offers a potential inflection point. It provides a startling contrast in the candidates' views about multilateralism and, relatedly, the prospects for institutional reform. Many allies would be quietly relieved by a Biden victory, if only to reduce the chaos induced by the Trump presidency. Perhaps surprisingly, however, both candidates' positions are problematic when it comes to the issue of multilateral institutional reform, albeit it in different ways and for different reasons.

The case regarding the Trump administration is relatively simple, albeit the implications deeply disturbing. A succession of decisions, reinforced by a flowing, reckless, public commentary, has raised the spectre of the end of the Liberal International Order to which the United States has contributed foundationally since 1945 (Ikenberry, 2018). From his abandonment of the embryonic Trans-Pacific Partnership and NAFTA, to his undermining of the dispute settlement function within the WTO, Trump has demonstrated a willingness to undermine multilateral economic institutions. Instead, he has relied on bilateral sanctions and tariffs as preferred, blunt instruments of economic power. This tendency has been repeated when Trump has dealt with elements of the UN, the most noteworthy examples being the US withdrawal from the WHO, to which the US has historically been the largest single contributor, and from UNESCO.

Most noteworthy in terms of its security implications has been the American withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan or Action with Iran, failure to extend the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, and persistent criticism of NATO. Finally, perhaps most importantly, the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has isolated the US from its allies and the international community more broadly. Trump's pattern has been repetitive, transparent, and disingenuous: He demands organisational reforms in exchange for American support in search of 'a better deal' than his predecessors – usually referenced in terms of Barack Obama – without providing a substantial, feasible agenda for those reforms (Levin, 2018).

The propensity towards an assault on multilateralism has been reinforced by Trump's electoral strategy of abandoning any pretence of reconciliation with China, in favour of prioritising it as a major source of America's ills, along with European 'free-riders' and 'criminal immigrants'. The use of incendiary symbolic language, such as referring to Covid-19 as the 'Chinese Virus', and later the racially-charged 'Kung Flu', has only exacerbated taut bilateral relations, much to the chagrin of Chinese government officials who have responded in kind by blaming the virus' origins on the American military (Rogers, Jakes and Swanson, 2020; Myers, 2020).

The implications of a second Trump term are clearly problematic for a reform agenda. He himself has openly discussed the notion of bifurcation of the global economic system, in reality amounting to an Anglo-sphere and a Sino-sphere, presumably fomented through a division of the global finance system (Wolfe, 2020). More likely though would be a vacuum of leadership in which China unevenly expands its influence without organisational reform, the WHO portending what that process would look like. At most, partial multilateral reform might take place with the US on the sidelines – with limited ensuing benefits.

A Biden electoral victory offers an intriguing possibility, but not one as optimistic for the prospects of multilateral institutional reform as the casual observer might imagine. A Biden administration would certainly be more engaged and cooperative. But the base context here is important. First, the Washington Beltway community – broadly defined as policymakers, military officials, and think tank denizens – has preponderantly chosen to maintain a narrow definition of national security that focuses on military threats, despite Covid-19 devastating public health and economic consequences. In that environment, a bipartisan consensus has consolidated around the belief that China represents the greatest military challenge to the United States, one that has to be addressed on every front (Drezner, 2020). The expansion of the US military command to include the Indo-Pacific – from just Asia – is just one example of an institutional reform reflective of this belief. Second, adding a layer of complexity to Sino-US relations, the American economic vulnerabilities exposed by Covid-19 – specifically, its lack of PPE and pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity – has led to an equally widespread questioning of America's reliance on a globalised supply chain structure and, pointedly, an acceptance of China's malfeasance during the pandemic (Devlin, Silver, and Huang, 2020).

In that context, Biden's 'restorative' electoral platform may contrast in many respects with Trump's 'rejectionist' one. His administration would be far more respectful of a rules-based order. But his election nonetheless remains problematic in terms of multilateral reform. First, although Biden offers a discernible difference in tone, he was a key supporter of the rebalance of US forces to Asia during the Obama administration and has expressed a comparable distrust of China's military ambitions. Second, among a series of measures, he has promised to rebuild America's medical-industrial complex to avoid the pitfalls of the current shortage ('The Biden Plan to Combat Coronavirus', 2020). In tandem, these two factors offer the prospect of the enhanced bipolarity with China discussed in the report, and add the possibility of a third feasible area of decoupling to the digital and AI domains – that of public health – although that issue is heavily debated within the Democratic Party.

Further undermining the prospects for global institutional reform is the Biden foreign policy team's underlying assumption that the US can reengage, re-sign old agreements, and return to a position of global leadership. "Biden's message may be tilted toward the future, but its overarching theme will be the reclamation of past glories squandered by the present president: the reassertion of America's global leadership, the rehabilitation of America's reputation, the renewal of American credibility" (Friedman and Giglio, 2019). Such a plea rings hollow, unrealistically nostalgic, if it entails, according to his campaign website, "taking immediate steps to renew our own democracy and alliances, protect our economic future, and once more place America at the head of the table, leading the world to address the most urgent global challenges". To that vague list Biden adds, only slightly more specifically, competing effectively with China, reducing foreign troop deployments in war, addressing climate change, and "reimagining partnerships".

Some of those actionable foreign policy items will be welcomed by many allies, relieved more by Trump's departure than reassured by Biden's arrival. And there is a group within Trump's team of advisors, it should be noted, who do contemplate significant policy change. But it is not, in the language of William Burns, the "reinvention" of American foreign policy that may be required for a successful process of multilateral reform (Burns, 2020). Rather – Biden's campaign being armed with a familiar, often criticised, set of foreign policy advisors from prior democratic administrations (Shahid Ahmed) – it portends an expectant resumption of American leadership. But the system has evolved in the last four years and occurs at a point where American cooperation is essential but its ambitions for leadership are treated with scepticism, if not hostility. Perhaps scarred by dealing with the Trump administration, Emmanuel Macron, for example, has advocated "European solutions for European problems". Josep Borrell, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, echoing the sentiment, has advocated "strategic autonomy" for the EU.

Realistically, the recovery of American credibility will certainly have to precede any claims to leadership. The Biden foreign policy team are not naive. They recognise that alliance relations will not, axiomatically, be reaffirmed. But whether they can reimagine alliances, and politically tolerate a multilateral system not headed by the US, is another matter. In effect, a Biden administration will have to reinvent American foreign policy as a precondition for effective multilateral reform. While its tone would differ, the early signs of a capacity to do so are not encouraging.

Multilateralism will always remain under-developed if states cannot convince themselves that they are engaged in acts of self-determination in multilateral decision-making. The concept of sovereignty-pooling, developed in the context of the development of the European Union, still rings alarm bells for most states. The way beyond this impasse is ironically captured in another concept developed in the evolution of the European Union – the *subsidiarity* principle; that is a process whereby decision-making takes place at that lowest level which allows for the retention of as much decision-making autonomy as possible. Only those issues that cannot be solved at the lower level are escalated to a higher level. Practitioners of multilateralism have been slow to recognise the importance and sensitivity of the subsidiarity principle's need to respect the sovereignty of other states.

Of the other great powers, India's rhetoric, if not always its practice, is firmly in the camp of a commitment to multilateralism. In the words of Suresh Prabhu, its current G20 Sherpa,

> "India believes in multilateralism … and the promotion of … a rules-based, democratic, transparent global trading system. … India is also wedded to the reform of the UN and [wishes to] … redefine 'global cooperation' by developing win-win solutions. … A sustainable world can't be built on some countries growing at the expense of others. We can't build peaceful societies unless we remove socioeconomic disparities. We can't think of a world order that lacks empathy and mutual respect" (Prabhu, 2020).

But he also recognises that 'to say so is not to do so'. For Prabhu, policy responses must be crafted multilaterally:

> "Experience shows us that we have gained more by working together as a global family than separately. … There's a need to have an introspective attitude to re-examining the efficacy of the present global order and multilateral institutions. Both must be reformed to become more relevant, effective, transparent, participatory, and to reflect today's geopolitical reality and geo-economic necessities. If we do this wisely, we must then build an equitable global order, removing inequality and injustice from both our national and global frameworks" (Ibid).

These are clearly the right rhetorical noises, but as is invariably the case, they lack specificity and sit at odds with policy practice, especially in Prabhu's intimations that the multilateral endeavour will inevitably be constrained by "geopolitical reality" – basically code for the kind of incompatibility between sovereign policymaking and international cooperation identified by Inge Kaul. India is, of course, basically no different to many other states. This kind of thinking is very much in the traditional realist paradigm that is unlikely to help drive forward multilateral cooperation. But as Ian Goldin demonstrates in box 10 below, there is no going back to 20th-century multilateralism.

Box 11: Multilateralism and the search for collective institutional leadership and governance, Ian Goldin

A common trope of blockbuster films is that the presence of a common enemy unites disparate powers around a common objective. Covid-19 has tested the Hollywood script. US-China tension has increased, with the pandemic blame-game joining proxy battles over trade and cybersecurity. Parts of the global governance system have shone, with the IMF approving emergency financing for over 70 countries at record speed. Yet the weaknesses of other multilateral institutions have been highlighted, with the WHO joining the WTO in crisis. It remains to be seen whether collective action on vaccine distribution will repeat the failures of global emissions reduction negotiations, and whether misaligned international incentives will again hurt the most vulnerable.

Where does the search for international leadership and governance go from here? We should start by recognising two key points (Goldin, 2014). First, fully global governance is rarely necessary – collaboration between a subset of the most important countries is often sufficient. Second, global governance should not just mean global governments – cities, companies, and non-governmental networks can play a major role. From pandemics to computer viruses to financial contagion, we face networked problems, which require networked solutions.

Plurilateralism: Squeezing between a rock and a hard place

The upside of scale effects and positive feedback loops is that many global challenges are centred on a small number of major players. Finance is dominated by activity in fewer than a dozen systemically-important hubs, driven by self-reinforcing agglomeration effects. Just twelve countries account for 72% of the world's CO2 emissions (Ritchie and Roser, 2017). High-income countries use twice as many antibiotics as low-income countries (Klein et al., 2018), although antimicrobial resistance in middle-income countries is also a growing threat. History has left other issues similarly concentrated. Only nine countries have nuclear weapons (SIPRI, 2019a). Large parts of the world pose little to no cyber-security threat, given their limited IT infrastructure. Such challenges do not require truly global agreement – given their top-heavy nature, 'critical mass' can be achieved through a deal among just the key actors (Oxford Martin Commission, 2013; Warwick Commission, 2008).

This approach can be useful even for the most intractable issues, from war to poverty. The US and Russia alone produce more than 50% of the world's armaments (SIPRI, 2019b). Commodities are critical in provoking or exacerbating many conflicts; programmes like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Kimberley Process, or Publish What You Pay can create coalitions to tackle these issues upstream. Corruption often requires the means to save ill-gotten gains in distant bank accounts, which are themselves concentrated in a small number of tax havens (Zucman, 2015). The primary drivers of declining poverty rates over the last 40 years were rapid growth in China and India. Getting things right in a few key places can be far more effective than waiting for an unreachable unanimity.

Leadership beyond governments

States face constraints that other actors do not; effective action on global issues will require working with the private sector. In September 2019, Amazon made a 'Climate Pledge', including ordering 100,000 electric delivery trucks and committing to be carbon neutral by 2040. Six months later, the company's founder, Jeff Bezos, committed $10bn of his personal wealth to funding scientists, activists, and NGOs working on climate issues. Ten public companies each spend more than $10 billion on research and development per year, more than the whole of Mexico (Strategy, 2018). This includes Volkswagen, whose investment in electric cars – along with that of new rivals like Tesla – will be vital for enabling the carbon transition. Ditto Johnson & Johnson, with respect to antimicrobial resistance (Gulland, 2018). Partnerships with pharmaceutical firms are critical in the race to produce a Covid-19 vaccine.

The coronavirus pandemic has also highlighted the role of cities and regional authorities in handling global challenges, with many mayors and governors making major decisions. Cities consume two-thirds of the world's energy and account for more than 70% of global CO2 emissions (C40 Cities, 2020). The Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations (2013) argued for a C20-C30-C40 coalition of the largest countries, companies, and cities to fight climate change. Quasi-government agencies and civil society can also play a major role; indeed, much of the current architecture of globalisation was sketched out by such actors, from the first Universal Postal Union in the mid-19th century to the first hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) in the 1990s.

Networks can counter the paradox of globalisation, that we "need more government on a global and a regional scale, but don't want the centralisation of decision-making power and coercive authority so far from the people actually to be governed" (Slaughter, 2005). As non-hierarchical platforms for governance and dialogue, networks create a framework for government without requiring a sacrifice of sovereign power (Woods and Martinez-Diaz, 2009). The 1989 Montreal Protocol, which averted environmental catastrophe by achieving complete phase-out of global CFC production by 1996, was built on successful collaboration between scientific experts, the private sector, social scientists, and large funders (Royal Society, 2011). The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation similarly connects donors, civil society, UN agencies, and national government, and has helped to prevent over 13 million deaths since it was founded in 2000 (GAVI, 2020). The next generation of global governance will emerge from experimentation across such networks, rather than being the design of a few central officials.

Global Governance 2.0

Recognising these realities does not mean abandoning attempts to reform existing multilateral organisations. The UN Security Council's P5 composition, or the convention of American and European heads of the World Bank and IMF, are perma-scandals whose legitimacy erodes further each year. Parallel China-centred institutions are becoming increasingly important, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the constellation of bilateral agreements forming the Belt and Road Initiative.

Historically Western institutions must endeavour to reform before relative decline becomes irreversible.

Indeed, properly resolving the current crisis does require global action by governments. Only governments can enforce lockdowns, and no other actor has the financial muscle to support crippled economies. In our globalised economy, an outbreak of Covid-19 anywhere is a threat everywhere, so all nations must be involved in the solution. Going forward, a central global disease-monitoring capacity is required, backed up by the capacity for rapid intervention before an outbreak reaches a hub airport. Funding can be based on ability to pay, but all countries need to agree to participate.

For other crises, from climate change to cyber-crime to bio-terrorism, substantial progress can be made through plurilateral coalitions of a variety of actors. As any lockdown film-buff knows, the rough-and-ready assembly of misfits wins in the end. The priority right now is to use the current crisis to catalyse new, broader, and stronger alliances.

The lacuna in global leadership: In search of enlightened personal leadership

Most of the contributors to this report have focussed on the importance of institutional reform and especially the need for collective *institutional* leadership if multilateralism is to be restored to a position of central utility in global decision-making. But 'leadership' is one of the essentially contested analytical concepts of the modern social and human sciences, with massive implications for how public policy is made. And it is, or should be, the subject of research and analysis not only by historians, economists, political scientists, and legal scholars but also by a second category of scholars in the behavioural sciences: notably sociologists, psychologists, and management specialists. In the box below, one of the few psychologists who studies international relations, Luk Van Langenhove, elaborates for us the all too often overlooked relationship between multilateralism and *people*.

Box 12: It's people stupid: Populism and multilateralism, Luk Van Langenhove

1. Introduction

Populism does not sit well together with multilateralism. Populists often dismiss multilateral cooperation or question the legitimacy of multilateral decisions. There are plenty of examples of political leaders expressing anti-multilateral views and acting accordingly. What is more, there is no shortage of citizen support for them. Often, anti-multilateralism is justified by claiming that multilateralism breaches national sovereignty. On other occasions, a multilateral policy is rejected because it implies far-from-home interventions by the state. Both justifications are in tune with populist thinking that invariably favours isolationism over interventionism. In this context, populists are direct enemies of international cooperation.

The thesis advanced in this short note is that populism itself is however only a symptom of the cognitive root-causes of anti-multilateral thinking. One route to deeper understanding is to be found in the psychological explanations for why international cooperation seems, for some, a bad idea. To paraphrase the UNESCO slogan, "since anti-multilateralism begins in the minds of people, it is in the minds of people that the defenses of multilateralism must be constructed". This is where psychology comes in.

2. The psychology of multilateralism

In principle, multilateralism is about interactions, cooperation, and agreements between sovereign states. But states are always represented by leaders who have the power to talk on behalf of states, as well as to take decisions about any form of multilateral cooperation. One of the often-forgotten aspects of realist thinking is that when asserting that states only act out of self-interest, the notion of the state is anthropomorphised.

That is, it is endowed with human characteristics. But, as Jessop notes, "it is not the state which acts: it is always specific sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts of the system" (Jessop, 1990, p. 367). In other words, only persons are agents in international relations. This implies that at the end of the day, states can have no self-interest, only people can. Similarly, states never speak, nor do they cooperate or feel angry. Only people representing a state can. This observation has two major consequences for international cooperation:

- *The idea of being able to speak for a state is appealing to some persons who might be tempted to think that because they can represent a state, they more or less are the state; vis Louis XV, 'L'état c'est moi'. On the other hand, if a statesperson behaves as if he or she is the state, it seems obvious that this is only a role. Although some people will find it difficult to see through the dramaturgy of being a state leader, especially when operating in international fora.*

- *As states can only interact with each other via persons that speak on behalf of states, the dynamics of conversations are applicable to state-to-state interactions. In sum, there is no reason to think that multilateralism is something that happens outside of the realm of human interactions. Conversations, even if they are negotiations or decision-making processes, are so much more than the communication of opinions. Equally important is the moral component, which supports the expression of certain identities.*

3. Populism revisited

Populism is a catch-all concept for a leadership style that builds upon three premises: (i) The leader knows the lives of the people; (ii) The leader is the sole representative of that sentiment; and (iii) There is no alternative to executing the populist agenda that does not emanate from the leader. Populist leaders can be followed by people who: (i) Appreciate that somebody seems to know what to do; (ii) Are opposed to other viewpoints; and (iii) Believe that only the leader can 'save' them.

Several attempts have been made to capture populism in psychological terms. Mainstream psychological literature on the pathologies of leadership and the peculiarities of the thinking of statesmen aims to account for authoritarian leadership behaviour. Psychologists have tried to understand such behaviour by linking it to authoritarian personality traits. Often this results in circular reasoning: a person shows authoritarian behaviour because he or she is an authoritarian personality, and they have an authoritarian personality because they perform authoritarian behaviour or they are narcissists. A more modern approach tries to move away from 'traits' and 'personality types' and to focus either on cognitive characteristics of the brain or on the discursive processes of identity-building.

4. The need for sense-making of the world

The popularity of populism is not simply, or even necessarily, to be found in the personality disorder of populist leaders, nor in the evil mind of those who are called populists. It might be that the attractiveness of populism is rooted in the functioning of the brain and in the way persons cope with everyday life. There is evidence (see Haidt, 2012) that populism fulfils a need in people to make sense of the world in which they live their lives, as well as providing a sense of identity that allows them to see themselves as distinct persons that belong to a right-thinking group.

As biological beings, people are gifted with mental functions, such as language and cognitive skills, to analyse abstract problems that allow them to do so much more than other biological creatures. But the thing that really differentiates the human species from the animal world is that human beings became organised in complex societies where collaboration and divisions of labour emerge. Some people develop skills to produce certain tools, which can be traded with other goods. This creates a complex social environment that allows a society to profit from the endeavors and specialisations of many persons. This has resulted in a material and social environment that is so complex that no one fully understands how it functions.

In addition, people believe they know more about the world than they actually do. There is an "illusion of knowledge" as Sloman and Fernbach (2017) have convincingly argued where what is unknown can be substituted by beliefs. For many aspects of daily life, people can use things as tools without knowing much about how they function. As long as there are others who do. That is certainly also the case with international relations and the functioning of multilateralism. Outside of the community of scholars and international civil servants, who knows how Chapter VIII of the UN Charter works or how the African Union benefits from this?

People do not necessarily oppose multilateralism because they are convinced that cooperation is not good. Anti-multilateralism might just be a by-product of a lack of adequate knowledge combined with the need to make sense of the world. Here, identity plays an important role.

Conclusions: In defense of multilateralism

Contrary to national identity, which is constantly flagged in society and therefore easy to appropriate, multilateralism is, by and large, absent in the daily lives of most citizens. If one agrees that multilateralism is a complex practice that is poorly understood by most people and that populism is a way of making sense of the world, and if one realises that for autocratic leaders it is tempting to use the dominant identity source of nationalism, then this analysis has consequences for rebooting multilateralism. Endeavours to promote multilateralism should focus upon the following strategies:

(i) The need to raise knowledge of what multilateralism is and does;
(ii) The need to stop demonising populism but accept that such incorrect beliefs can be sincerely held;

Populism needs to be seen less as an extremist phenomenon and more as a way in which citizens try to cope with a complex world. The danger of populism is its potential for malevolent use in the hands of autocratic leaders, who exploit it by conflating their role with that of the state. More needs to be done to contain this phenomenon:

(iii) By building strong institutions that constrain the actions of such leaders;
(iv) By mobilising new ways to practice democracy;
(v) By increasing the insights into the psychology of international relations to develop better informed citizens.

Containing populist authoritarianism will only be possible by providing alternative frameworks for making sense of the world.

The leadership multilateralism needs

Extending Van Langenhove's discussion of the relationship between populism and multilateralism, this short section looks at the issue of leadership. Most analyses of leadership in international relations invariably treat it as an institutional issue. But as we learn from Van Langenhove, leadership is not only an institutional issue, it is also a question of agency and particularly *the role of people as leaders*. Personal leadership is of more interest to the second category of analysts identified above, especially those within psychology and management studies. But they are usually dealing with personal leadership in corporate or national organisational contexts, especially corporations. They do not usually deal with it in an international context. By extension, and important in any endeavour to reboot multilateralism, the role of the individual leaders, and especially national political leaders operating beyond the confines of the state, must be addressed. When it is not ignored completely, it is invariably only tackled obliquely. This is a major analytical mistake. We cannot talk about global leadership without talking about the *people* responsible for it. If we accept Van Langenhove's analysis, it is people as leaders who are the impediments to international cooperation.

The implications of discussing personal leadership can only be touched on here but, to put it succinctly, and perhaps not very diplomatically, many major global leaders are, by personal socio-psychological disposition, ill-suited, if not downright opposed, to the international cooperative endeavour. Like it or not, this needs to be discussed. To avoid it is analytically and ethically improper, socio-politically weak, and it misses what is perhaps one of the major obstacles to international reform. Until we start asking appropriate questions about leadership, especially what we have got and more importantly what we are looking for in the behaviour of world leaders, we will get nowhere. This is not merely a scholarly concern. According to *The Economist* data team's analysis of 'What the World Worries About', over 60% of the world's population in 2016 believed that their leaders were the reason their countries were on the wrong track.

Populist authoritarianism, of either the right or the left, tend to produce what is commonly and uncritically) referred to as 'strongmen leaders', and they are mostly male. Indeed, international political leadership is so masculine that most people struggle to name more than one or two female leaders beyond Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi, and Angela Merkel. 'Strongman leadership' is often identified with what the scholarly psychological and management literature sees as a series of destructive personality traits – narcissism, self-absorption, self-admiration, overconfidence, and a high but fragile sense of self-esteem – in which arrogance, power, and loudness, rather than humility, wisdom, and calmness seem to predominate.

Such traits are visibly more prevalent amongst leaders than rank and file members of the population. Also, clinical narcissism is 40% higher in men than women (see Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019, pp. 42-48). Most importantly for this report, this strongman personality invariably lacks an affinity for multilateral cooperation. Cooperation requires personality traits such as an ability to listen and compromise. Unless cooperation is transactionally and instrumentally beneficial and occurs on their own terms, strongman leaders are usually

disinterested. They prefer the pursuit of self-aggrandising, self-interested, but often harmful and sometimes corrupt, agendas.

There is substantial evidence from Covid-19 management that populist leaders, such as Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, and Boris Johnson, have handled the pandemic much worse than more consensual female leaders, such as Angela Merkel, Tsai Ing-wen, and Jacinda Ardern. So, if most populist-authoritarian leaders are male and not good managers, does it follow that bad leadership would decrease if there were less men and more women in charge? If the answer is yes, then by extension it would suggest that the chances of international cooperation would, in all probability, also be enhanced if the proportion of women in international leadership positions increased. To bring about such change is vital to international cooperation but is easier said than done, since it requires counter-factual reasoning at the basis of leader selection.

As Chamorro-Premuzic's research has demonstrated (2019), the under-representation of women in leadership roles has less to do with the absence of competence and motivation in women and more to do with our inability to control for the incompetence and lack of actual talent of some male leaders. In this context, the problem is less the barriers to entry for women, which of course do exist. More significant is the lack of career obstacles for incompetent men. This is a problem given that the evidence from the world of business, that women generally outperform men in leadership roles, is substantial and reliable (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019, pp. 85-102), and the characteristics they bring to their roles as leaders – especially creativity, flexibility, self-control, fairness, and empathy – are clearly attributes required for international dialogue and are more likely to enhance international cooperation rather than those exhibited by strongmen leaders. These are precisely the kind of dialogue skills that the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute should be promoting.

But an initial problem is that the leadership skills that women exhibit are not those that get you into leadership positions in the first instance. The personality traits to be chosen as a leader are more those exhibited by 'strongmen' – especially self-centredness, self-promotion, over-confidence, and a sense of entitlement to high office, which conform to the usually unspoken stereotype of leaders and which are entirely the opposite of what is required for international dialogue and the development of international cooperation.

Things have to change. Women have to play a greater role in international decision-making if we are to enhance the prospects for multilateral cooperation on key global challenges. But maybe things are changing slightly. Digitalisation, especially through the internet and social media, has become an important element of women's empowerment via its potential to connect women across geographical and social divides and to build online communities without having to go through structures of high-level institutional influence to become greater players in the hybrid nature of global decision-making (see Levenstein, 2020).

Similar arguments for greater inclusion can be made for the importance of including youth in increasingly hybrid decision-making structures. It is only with the earlier input of the younger generation that we will enhance international transparency and dignity. As shown in a major

2020 comparative and detailed study by Columbia University, *Youth in a Changing World,* we see that there is a growing youth awareness that they are the future and they need to be able to have significant input into its direction. The Columbia study shows that there is frustration with "… established institutions that do not reflect the demands of a changing world" (Youth in a Changing World, 2020). Young people in the study particularly expressed disappointment at the failure of states to tackle to Covid-19 collectively.

Respondents to the Columbia survey also expressed more general reservations about the viability of the old global order. But they were not without optimism, and some saw the pandemic as an opportunity to create a more equitable future. They were eager to engage in shaping the future. The pandemic was seen as a time for government to recognise that young people do matter in socio-economic and political processes. Global youth won't go back to the old normal. As we begin imagining a post-Covid-19 world, we must recognise that young people have a stake in rebuilding a better world.

Towards multiplex governance?

In the final contribution to this report, Amitav Acharya identifies the implications of the 2020 pandemic for the nature of contemporary global governance in what he has described as a "Multiplex World Order", a term he first coined in 2004 (see Acharya, 2014 and 2017) to describe the changing configuration of global power, institutions, and ideas that have "... accompanied the relative decline of the West and the liberal international order created and dominated by the US". For him, the multiplex world order identifies "… the possibility of an alternative, or post-hegemonic, global order and governance structure".

Box 13: Covid-19 and multiplex governance, Amitav Acharya

The 'multiplex world' is a convenient metaphor that captures six key trends that have been unfolding for some time. These are as follows:

- *Declining US hegemony; but the unlikelihood that any other great power, including China, will replace it and assume the position that the UK did before World War One and the US did after World War Two.*

- *A proliferation of other consequential actors; not just great powers or states but non-state actors, institutions, corporations, social movements, and extremist networks.*

- *A broader structure of interdependence among nations, resting not just on trade or investments, but also on transnational production networks, as well as mutual sensitivity and vulnerability across a range of other issues: climate; pandemics; energy/resources; and migration/refugees.*

- *Multilevel governance and a more fragmented and pluralised architecture of global governance, including the growing role of non-state groups, private foundations, public-private partnerships, and regionalised structures which are nonetheless interconnected. This does not imply a return to autarchic regional blocs or great power spheres of influence like the 19th-century German Mitteleuropa or the Japanese East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, but rather regional worlds that are relatively 'open' and interactive with each other.*

- *Leadership in managing global challenges no longer belongs exclusively to clubs such as the G8 or G20, but also to G-plus configurations – states plus non-state actors – with interests and competencies in different issue areas. No single country/actor has the capacity to organise the world in every issue area but the major ones can expect to be the key drivers; for example, the US may remain a first among equals in the world military balance, China is shaping up to be the major player in international development, and the EU is taking a leading role in the management of climate change.*

- *A world of multiple modernities, rather than an 'end of history' marked by the alleged triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism over other ideas. A Multiplex World is a multi-civilisational world but one which nonetheless manages to avoid a clash of civilisations through interdependence and dialogue.*

To bring these factors together does not lead to conventional 'multipolarity'. Multipolarity is usually defined as an international system in which three or more powers or 'poles' shape global outcomes through their relatively superior material – economic and military –capabilities. Multiplexity implies a dynamic theatre, the main actors of which are not just great powers, but also institutions, corporations, and social movements from both civil and uncivil (extremist) society, which can shape global patterns of order/disorder through material and ideational resources, as well as issue-based leadership.

The idea of multiplexity captures an increasingly pluralistic and decentred world order, which is culturally diverse yet functionally interdependent. It is in this context that we must, from 2020 on, ask what the effect of Covid-19 pandemic might be on governance in a multiplex world. While it is too early for definitive conclusions, some trends towards further multiplex global governance are visible, noting that Covid-19 presents challenges to the international community in addition to better understood transnational threats. Covid-19 moves much faster than climate change, is more globally destructive than terrorism, and has arguably affected more countries and people more directly than the two world wars of the 20th century.

The crisis of multilateralism and global governance triggered by Covid-19 may be described as a 'three-C crisis': one of ***c****oordination, credibility, and confidence. The crisis of coordination is not just due to the escalating rivalry between the US and China that the pandemic has brought about, but also the competition among nations to 'stay safe' by closing national borders, and the scramble for vaccines, or 'vaccine nationalism'.*

The crisis of credibility can be seen in the ineffectual response and performance of the existing multilateral system to ease the panic, provide relief measures, or arrest the spread of the virus. These effects have combined to further undermine overall confidence in an already ailing multilateral system.

Indeed, this 'three-C crisis' ensures the further erosion of the liberal international order under Western and US dominance. That order was already in atrophy before the election of President Trump in 2016. But the precarious performance of the US in containing the virus has dealt a powerful blow to US global credibility. The liberal international order has been severely undermined by the pandemic's effects, with the closing of national borders, the sentiment against neoliberal globalisation – which is seen as a transmission belt for the rapid spread of the virus – and the contraction of world trade. The credibility of big multilateral institutions, already reeling from hostile US policies, has been aggravated by the US withdrawal from the World Health Organization.

While Covid-19 is seemingly undercutting one element of the Multiplex World, i.e., economic interdependence, especially with the realisation of the security vulnerabilities of global supply chains and sentiments favouring national self-reliance, it may accelerate the rise of another: a G-plus trend in global governance. The pandemic has brought a variety of responses from states; international institutions; regional groups, with the EU playing a creditable role after an initially slow start; and the private sector, including those producing vaccines and drugs.

The pandemic has also called into question the importance of material power traditionally used to measure multipolarity. Neither the US nor China has endeared itself as a world leader in handling the pandemic; China with its initial misinformation about the virus, and the US with its utter haplessness in containing it within its borders. Similarly, several individual great or emerging powers, the UK, Russia, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa, among others, have not risen to the occasion either. By contrast, some of the most effective responses to the pandemic have come from middle powers and smaller states/territories, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Thailand.

The EU's effective if belated response to the pandemic shows the potential of regional organisations in dealing with transnational threats, although the EU's institutional and resource-capacity is not found in other regional groups. At the same time, a good deal of the policy setting to fight the virus is being made at sub-national levels, especially at the level of states in federations, counties, and cities. These two trends – the inter-regional and the sub-regional – attest to the importance of multi-level governance, which will clearly come to assume greater importance in the post-pandemic world order.

Thus, one possible effect of the Covid-19 pandemic could be furthering the regionalisation of the global economic and political order. This may involve a regionalisation of supply chains as well as regionalisation of health management, due to the weakening of the WHO and the emergence of travel bubbles among members of regional groups such as the EU, ASEAN, and among South Pacific nations. This would further accelerate the shift towards a decentred, Multiplex World.

Conclusion: Multilateralism and the search for common sense

This report, the second Rhodes Forum report, has reflected on the difficulties of trying to reform and reinvigorate a multilateral cooperative order in this time of increasingly acute global crises. It has made it clear that multilateralism was in trouble before Covid-19. At neither the level of principle nor practice has multilateralism kept up with the major changes taking place in world order. The report does not dwell on the more apocalyptic scenarios, but nor does it ignore the problems we face in dealing collectively with the global challenges that face humanity. Rather, in a more practical – what we have called a *possibilist* – vein, it seeks to find some green shoots of potential progress.

What these challenges have in common – whether thrown up by a pandemic or the effects of climate change – is that the optimal solutions to them are unlikely to be secured in the absence of collective action problem-solving of the kind that must be supported by multilateralism. Note here, the report has been keen to distinguish multilateral activity as practical collective activity from globalism as an ideology. Where the concept of globalism carries implications, and accompanying ideological baggage, of wider global governance, multilateralism is more tightly defined as a decision-making process including three or more partners. Multilateralism as practice has been conflated with or absorbed by the populist language that rejects globalism as an ideology of world order, or, for the more conspiratorial, of world domination. Consequently, the report has tried to disaggregate the multilateral enterprise from the wider set of issues surrounding it.

The report has offered a series of suggestions for what we might see as the ingredients of any new internationalist and institutional charter to reboot multilateralism. To a committed multilateralist, the suggestions put forward in the report – the importance of the principles of *community* and *solidarity* discussed in part one and the practices of *international institutionalism* discussed in parts two and three – reek of common sense. But common sense is often in very short supply.

Rational objections to the multilateral endeavour of course exist. At the sensible end of the spectrum we can find analysts of a realist persuasion such as John Mearsheimer (2019) or Robert Kaplan (2020), who describe attempts to secure common, collective-action solutions to global challenges as no more than globalist-cosmopolitan meanderings. At the other extreme, one might even say the lunatic, often antisemitic, end of the spectrum, multilateralism is seen as part of a wider globalist conspiracy to forge a new world order and said to be manipulated by actors ranging from George Soros through to fantasist conspiracists such as QAnon, with its belief that globalisation is controlled by a group of internationally connected sex traffickers, including Hillary Clinton, running the world in their own interest from the basement of a Pizza parlour in Washington DC (Kang and Frenkel, 2020)!

If it were simply a question of common sense, then our ability to advance the multilateral cooperative dialogue would be considerably easier. Mutual respect between states and the recognition that other actors need to play a role in governance would not be contested. The

hybridity and complexity arguments about governance advanced in this report would be seen as essential elements of an infinitely more complex, modern-day decision-making process, rather than challenges to sovereignty. At the level of principle, working inclusively to solve transnational problems elicits a near unanimity of thinking. Recommendations on the *how* question, perhaps unsurprisingly, do not. Securing a common ground of practice, as opposed to principle, continues to prove more elusive.

If we really want to secure the rebooting of multilateralism, then committed internationalists need to do more than simply plead the virtues of solidarity and the idea of a *community of destiny* as the way to counter the wider excesses of populist-nationalist rhetoric. They need to recognise and work with the facts that belief in a *community of origin* and nationalist voices are strong and invariably trump the idea of a *community of destiny*. Multilateralists need to work with this fact of life. The overarching theme of the report has been to advocate 'possibilism' rather than search for some unattainable, pietistic, and elusive higher ground. Possibilism requires innovation in thinking but also realism in practice. Populism, as Van Langenhove explained, flourishes because *people* find it appealing.

Meta-values regarding governance are not simply the stuff of the philosopher. They are at the bedrock of human coexistence. But meta-values can no longer stop at the borders of the state. Responsible behaviour geared towards coexistence should be not only a domestic but also an international norm for governments. For multilateral cooperation to work, the search for interoperability between different levels and forms of governance must be a guiding principle in this time of complex, multi-actor hybridity in the global policy processes that have been described in the report. This is what many of the suggestions in part three have tried to do.

In a similar vein, in the search for a sovereignty-respecting modus operandi, Ian Goldin reminds us that governance is not a synonym for government understood simply in national terms. We don't need global governance to be an all-embracing form of government comparable to that found in nation-states. Other, non-governmental actors play increasingly important roles in decision-making in what the report has described as an increasingly hybrid system. Thus, we need to recognise the under-utilised potential of *critical mass* decision-making. Across policy domains, the number of actors required to make up a critical mass, with attendant agglomeration effects, is invariably small. Decisions can be driven by a small group of actors that reflects the views of the larger majority of actors central to any given policy area.

To illustrate, as Goldin notes, only nine countries have nuclear weapons, the US and Russia produce over 50% of the world's armaments, and just twelve countries account for in excess of 70% of the world's C02 emissions. So challenges can be dealt with by agreement between a critical mass of actors in these issue areas. It does not need a *global* agreement. This is the same in trade domains such as intellectual property, where the number of key players can be listed on the fingers one hand. What is crucial is that the critical mass making the decision consider the interests of all and sells it to the rest of the global community.

The potential of critical mass decision-making is not new, of course, especially in the trade domain (see the Warwick Commission, 2007). The major constraint is to be found in the structure of state-based international organisations that require full member consensus decision-making. This is one of the clear ways in which existing multilateral international organisations need reform. Securing agreement between a coalition of key relevant players can be far more effective than the search for an unattainable unanimity.

Similarly, agreements dominated by quasi-governmental agencies and other non-state actors can often demonstrate more flexibility than state-only negotiations. Sub-state actors, for example, are proving more willing than national governments to tackle climate change. Again as Goldin notes, this has proved to be the case for many, although not all, city mayors and state governors in the US in the face of Covid-19. Most importantly, as the report has gone to some length to note, networks create a framework for policymaking and decision-making that does not undermine the principles of state policy (see Stone, 2013; and Slaughter, 2017). And, networks will become more salient as digitalisation progresses (see Coyer and Higgott, 2020).

These innovations in global policymaking render the failure of the traditional multilateral organisations to respond in the face of change all too obvious. This is quintessentially the case with regards to the UN and the WTO, both of which have failed to respond to the pace of change in the political, economic, and technological worlds in which they operate. The results of the DOC survey on the UN (box 4) make it quite clear how many educated thinkers believe the Security Council is out of date and in need of reform. Similarly, the WTO of 2020 does not reflect the global trading world of the time of its creation in January 1995. The Covid-19 pandemic has also found the WHO wanting in this time of acute need. Arguably for all actors, their lack of responsiveness comes at a time of their greatest need.

Why has the world responded in such a piecemeal way to the Covid-19 threat? Why is this not a wake-up call to the probability of even more devastating pandemics joining climate change as major threats to humanity? Why can we not realise that we can only address such global issues collectively? One major explanation we have offered is the predominance of the distorted and short-term dynamics of poor political leadership. The report has suggested that we must find some semblance of common humanity, not only at the community level and not just through politicians, but also in wider global fora. But as the report has also suggested, many contemporary world leaders, increasingly comfortable in their populist support, tend to think mostly in exclusionary terms. Only with greater inclusion, especially of women and young people, can we hope to arrive at global governance structures that work for all.

The structures, as currently constituted, are not in place to allow us to move forward. Multilateralism continues to lack fairness. Agreements do not always treat smaller countries fairly in the implementation phase. Cheating happens and rich countries have the necessary political and economic resources to cherry pick which issues to advance at the level of implementation if they don't get their way in the initial agenda-setting phases of the policymaking process. So how we restructure international policymaking forums is as important as the values that underpin them. This is in large part a question of leadership. It is

not simply an issue of going back and doing what was done in the past, when states simply went through the motions of supporting multilateralism at a rhetorical level with little capital in the enterprise.

As Simon Reich's insights into the likely nature of US foreign policy behaviour after the November 2020 election clearly tell us, there really is no going back. A change of administration in the US will not inevitably lead to a return to US leadership. A rebooting of multilateralism is not necessarily on the cards. No change – the re-election of Trump – would clearly mean more of the same, or as is more likely, a further increase in hostility towards the existing multilateral order. If the evidence of the Trump administration to date is our guide, this would probably be accompanied by a stepping up of the transactional approach to US foreign policy. This in turn could see the end of existing multilateral institutions such as NATO in the security domain and the WTO in the economic domain.

Should Joe Biden prevail, following Reich's analysis, while there will at least be a slowdown of the erosion of US commitment to multilateralism experienced under Trump, there is neither the guarantee of a return to the status quo prior the Trump administration on the one hand, even if that were possible, nor the dawn of a renewed US commitment to lead a multilateral cooperative endeavour comparable to the role it played in the second half of the 20th century on the other. Similarly, in the core of US foreign policy – its relationship with China – Biden would be no appeaser. While the rhetoric may change, the tough approach to the relationship, underwritten by substantial bipartisan antipathy to China in both elite and popular opinion in the US, will undoubtedly continue.

One implication, whoever prevails in the election, is that other actors will need to look more to their own devices for multilateral cooperation. But few of the world's major powers are run by leaders who are instinctively drawn to multilateral cooperation at the international level. Part three of the report suggested several reasons why this is the case. The power of *agency* – the role of leaders – in support of multilateralism is at a low level not seen since the years prior to the outbreak of World War Two. Ironically, the prospects of change coming about as a result of the changing *structures* of the international order are probably more encouraging; especially if we give credence to Acharya's suggestion that the dawn of a multiplex world – as opposed to multipolar world, or worse a bipolar world – is upon us.

Will a multiplex world, rather than a more conflict-prone new Cold War built around growing US-China conflict, replace the ailing liberal international order? Does a multiplex world, alongside a reformed decision-making process, offer us a way to tackle global challenges? Can the UN, in its 75th year, step up to support reform in global decision-making processes? Particularly, what role can the UN play in boosting a sense of global solidarity among the earth's 7.5 billion citizens. The idea of a world *citizenry* is important. Citizens have rights. But so many of the world's population have no rights at the moment. Our language must change.

Perhaps most importantly, where does the world find the necessary leadership to assist in any reform processes? Van Langenhove demonstrated the difficulty of even discussing

multilateralism in a way that does not evoke resistance until we address the impasse over populism, nationalism, and identitarian politics. Without a refined discourse in which multilateralism is seen as a solution rather than a problem, Inge Kaul's "sovereignty bargains" will remain elusive.[8]

Of course, sovereignty matters but it must be accompanied by fairness if we are going to mitigate what Kaul sees as the seemingly incompatible nature of the relationship between collective international problem-solving and a satisfactory level of sovereignty in national decision-making. We need to respect national policymaking sovereignty in a way that was not always readily apparent in the discourse of hyper-globalisation and unipolar hegemony in the last quarter of the 20th century. But we must do this while also assuring that national spill-overs, especially those that pollute the global commons, do not harm other countries.

If we do not cooperate then we will lose sovereignty anyway in the face of mounting crises not solvable in national contexts only. Sensible but moderated moves towards greater national self-sufficiency and resilience – as opposed to dreams of sovereign autarky – will not eradicate the need for global problem-solving, for those issues that cannot be controlled within domestic policymaking communities, especially pandemics and climate issues.

The future of the UN

For multilateral institutions, especially the UN, to regain legitimacy and influence, they must show that they can empower citizens, rather than disenfranchise them in the face of raw, realist international politics. Appeals for cooperation around a 'rules-based international order' sound conciliatory and reasonable. But the concept has become clichéd and often begs the question of 'whose rules?' The rules agreed at the end of World War Two, when the UN was created, reflected the balance of forces in the world then. But the world today has a very different makeup. When the rules no longer reflect the changing reality, they can become a source of conflict rather than agreement.

Citing the growing reach of US and Chinese extraterritoriality, where he sees one set of rules for the great powers and another set of rules for other states, Gideon Rachman recently suggested that "… a rules-based order is giving way to something that feels more like 19th-century imperialism" (2020, September 21). The US use, in often heavy-handed manner, of extraterritoriality is known and well documented. China is just beginning to understand its utility and how to use it. In a declining rules-based order, smaller states are increasingly exposed to the vicissitudes of great power rivalry in a world of growing disconnect between 20th-century multilateralism and 21st-century geopolitics, absent any morally responsible great power leadership.

We require a new UN-led search for a consensus on what a revised rules-based order should look like. The opportunity of the 75th birthday must not be wasted. But, preparing this report

[8] Inge Kaul, speaking at a DOC online roundtable, 18 June 2020.

at the time of the September 2020 UNGA, omens are not good. Dramatic breakthroughs appear unlikely. The UN has faced constraints from its birth and we should note that it has considerable successes in the face of them. It may not have delivered on all the founding ambitions of its charter, especially on human rights, but it has, overtime, supported the delivery of enhanced prosperity and freedom for many global citizens. Between 1945 and 2020 as the world's population has grown, the number of people living in democracies has doubled from 30% to 60% (Roser, 2013) of the global population and global GDP per capita has grown from around US $3,000 to over US $14,500 per capita (Ibid).

While not all this can be attributed to the UN, and its role should not be overstated, its treaty, specialised agencies, and monitoring activities do nevertheless provide the basis for positive change. But, as its second secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, is purported to have said, the UN was not "… designed to take humanity to heaven but prevent it sliding into hell". Many of the old constraints still exist and newer ones have also emerged in recent years.

The UN remains the pre-eminent multilateral institution. However, the invariably self-interested preferences, attitudes, and behaviours of the P5 in the Security Council, in their use of the veto, mean its ability to act collectively will always be constrained by the prevailing logics of great power rivalry. This rivalry is growing rather than diminishing in the face of new crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which has seen both the US and China reject collective problem-solving in favour of the pursuit of their strategic rivalry (see Patrick, 2020).

The structures of the UN, especially the Security Council, no longer reflect geopolitical reality. Without reform of the Security Council, the UN is going nowhere. But the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Declaration, not for the first time in the history of the UN, fudged the issue, merely noting, "We commit to instil new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council". There were no specifics, such as a suggestion that its composition might need to be adjusted to reflect the global shifts that have taken place since its inception; especially if we contrast Europe's over-representation (permanent seats and veto power for the UK and France) with the lack of permanent representation for India's 1.4 billion people.[9]

Similarly, the gendered structure of the UN must change if it is ever going to be able to claim representative legitimacy. 25 years after the Fourth UN World Conference on Women pledged to secure "full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life", only nine of the 190 of the heads of state, heads of government, and ministers speaking for their nations at the 75th UNGA were women. This must surely be unacceptable. For international cooperation to progress, there has to be greater representation of women for all the reasons identified in part three of this report.

For the UN to survive as a functioning body, it also needs a recommitment from the US. Currently, US scepticism and resistance to a role for the UN is perhaps its most debilitating factor. Only in multilateral fora – in the UN and beyond – are we likely to find common ground

[9] India is currently an elected non-permanent member.

on the core transnational global policy challenges, be it older policy issues in the security and economic domains or newer issues such as climate change or pandemic management. While the UN will clearly remain one of these fora, there are now other actors of influence that were not present when the UN was founded. There are a range of regional and functional organisations and G+N groups from the G7, which Shada Islam argued was largely redundant, through to the G20, which clearly has a future role to play in crisis management.

Figure 1 in part one offered us the contours of a *pessimistic* post Covid-19 world order. By way of conclusion, figure 2 captures the essence of an *optimistic* post Covid-19 world order towards which humanity must strive. This would be one in which at a minimum, five factors pertain:

(i) The reform of globalisation takes greater account of the need to mitigate past inequalities at the same time as it supports the aggregate wealth-generating attributes of an open international economy and the benefits which accrue from it.

(ii) Reformed international institutions help avoid bipolar politics and assist us in managing the increasingly complex polycentricity of Acharya's multiplex order.

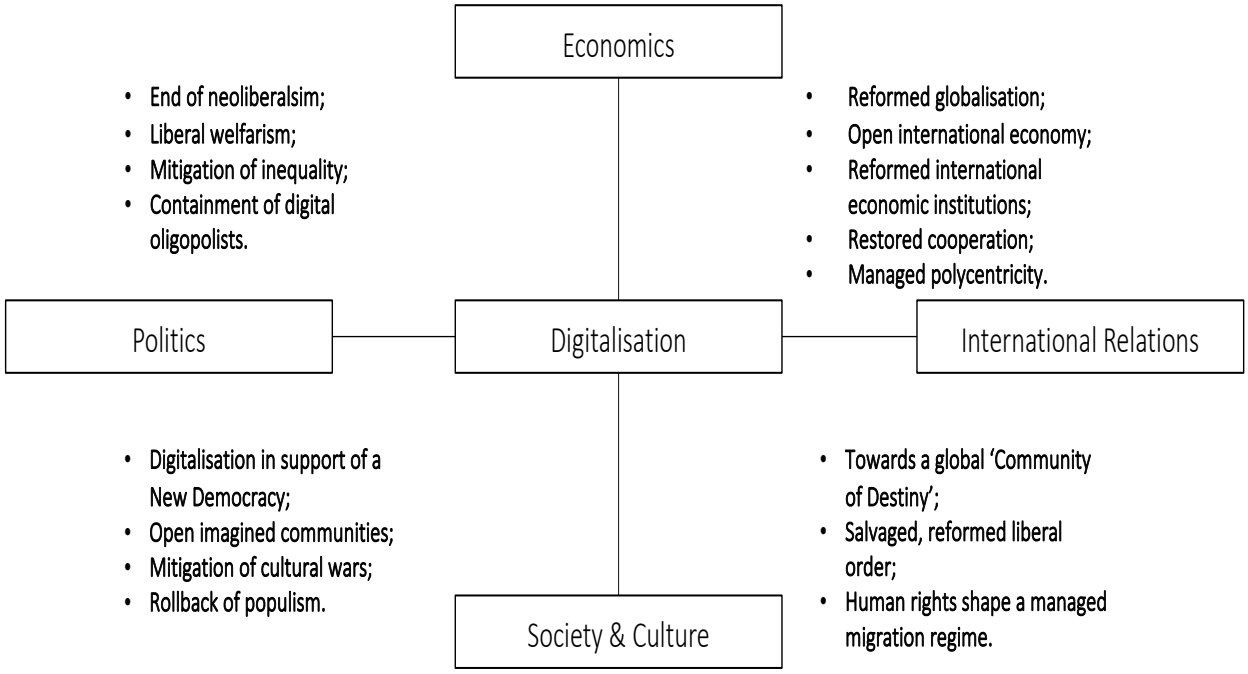
(iii) Both the US and China recognise the continuing utility of multilateralism, even in the midst of their heightened strategic rivalry, if only to consolidate relationships with their own allies. Neither of them want a longer pandemic or another global financial crisis, let alone military conflict. So, in the last instance, and it will probably only be in the last instance rather than earlier, we must hope their good sense kicks in. It is here that other G20 leaders have a massive future role to play. Other states must, to use a cliché, combine to keep the US and China honest.

(iv) The digitalisation of the world economy supports a reformed democracy rather than strengthens the hands of the digital oligarchs and the politics of authoritarianism.

(v) The mitigation of cultural wars avoids the prospect of a clash of civilisations.

Figure 2

A post-Covid-19 order: The optimistic scenario



Securing the above is, of course, a tall order. It requires what this report has called the recognition of *possibilism*, which in turn requires strong political will, good policy choices, and a discourse that is prepared to entertain the development of a set of values beyond those simply of our *communities of origin.* We need to encourage a global discussion on the kinds of values that might mobilise humanity to think more in terms of a *community of destiny*. This is a major philosophical exercise that needs practical application that can only be found in the world of politics.

Otto Von Bismarck once remarked that "Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable – the art of the next best". In the current day and age, this would be a start, but given the magnitude of contemporary challenges, it would be insufficient in the long term. Without a substantial and reformative political dialogue, we are left only with anarchy. This report has tried to suggest that anarchy is not inevitable. It is DOC Research Institute's aim to assist this process in a number of ways, notably through the enhancement of global dialogue and support for the kinds of initiatives outlined in the 75th UN Commemoration Declaration.

Recommendations

- Recognise that populism and nationalism are not going to go away. Learn to work around them and where necessary with them.

- Recognise that multilateralism is not the same as globalism.

- Recognise that a *multiplex* system is not the same as a multipolar system. Multiplexity offers the opportunity for collective active problem-solving in a way that multipolarity does not.

- Actively minimise the discourse of new the 'New Cold War' and 'Bipolarity'. In the face of great power irresponsibility, middle-powers and other actors should wherever possible hold the US and China to account.

- Recognise that the practice of multilateralism is not separable from a commitment to the principles of cooperation.

- Recognise that the time has come to invest in international institutions.

- Recognise the relationship between new technologies and political orders and the central future role of digitalisation in changing the international order and the relationship between states and their citizenry.

- Develop strategies to prioritise, as a matter of upmost urgency, the entrance of women leaders into international decision-making.

- Recognise that young people have a – if not *the* – major stake in rebuilding a post-Covid-19 world. Develop ways to integrate them into global decision-making.

- Recognise that the EU needs to resist dabbling with the discourse of geopolitics and unambiguously make clear that it believes in an inclusive, rules-based multilateral order. It should start by taking the lead to build a global partnership on health.

- Develop the principle of *critical mass* decision-making; noting the importance of bringing along those states that are not actually part of the decision-making process.

- Adhere to the subsidiarity principle in multilateral decision-making.

- The UN and other international organisations should take this opportunity to hold worldwide consultations on options to reinvigorate multilateralism.

    - Invite all Member States to convene multi-actor, national, and sub-national conversations on the topic. In effect, create a global Commission of the kind suggested by Jean-Christophe Bas in box 6.

    - Invitees should include global civil society actors, business organisations, and the academic community, with unprecedented and disproportionate representation of women and young people.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participants in the June 11 Webinar

- Amitav Acharya, UNESCO Chair in Transnational Challenges and Governance and Distinguished Professor at the School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC;
- Prof. Pablo Ava, Head of Policy and Research of the Argentina Council of Foreign Relations;
- Dr. Uri Dadush, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South;
- Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond, Under-Secretariat-General and Special Adviser at United Nations;
- Dr. Scherto Gill, Executive Secretary, Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace;
- Dr. Alexey Gromyko, Director of the Institute of Europe of the IE RAS;
- Dr. Richard Higgott, FRSA, FAcSS, Emeritus Professor of international Political Economy, University of Warwick and Professor, Brussels School of Governance, Vrije Universiteit Brussels;
- Dr. Deqiang Ji, Vice Dean of the Institute for a Community with Shared Future, at the CUC;
- Dhruv C Katoch, Director of the India Foundation;
- Dr. Inge Kaul, Senior Fellow at Hertie School of Governance and Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Global Development (CGD), Washington, DC;
- Prof. Dr. Luk van Langenhove, Professor and former Director at the Institute for European Studies;
- Prof. Raffaele Marchetti, Rector for Internationalization of LUISS University;
- Djoomart Otorbaev, former Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan;
- Daniel Perell, Representative to the United Nations at Bahá'í International Community;
- Dr. Walter Schwimmer, Former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Deputy Chairman of the SuBo;
- Mr. Urs Unkauf Advisor for Diplomacy at German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade (BWA);
- Dr. Huiyao Wang, President and Co-founder of the Center for China and Globalisation (CCG).

Appendix 2: Participants in the Second Webinar, June 18, 2020

- Dr. Kate Coyer, Director of the Civil Society and Technology Project for the Center for Media, Data and Society at Central European University (CEU);
- Dr. James Dorsey, Senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University;
- Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, Former Vice President of World Bank, Richard von Weizacker Fellow at Robert Bosch Academy and Principal of Africa Economic Development Policy Initiative;
- Prof. Vladimir Fortov, Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Former President of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2013 - 2017);
- Prof. Ian Goldin, Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on Technological and Economic Change;
- Prof. Grzegorz Kolodko, Professor of Economics at Kozminski University and former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland and Minister of Finance;
- Dr. Richard Higgott, FRSA, FAcSS, Emeritus Professor of international Political Economy, University of Warwick and Brussels School of Governance, Vrije Universiteit Brussels;
- Prof. Shada Islam, EU commentator & head of New Horizons Project;
- Prof. Kishore Mahbubani, Former Ambassador of Singapore to the UN and Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore;
- Prof. Katherine Marshall, Professor of the practice of development, conflict, and religion in the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University;
- Prof. Adrian Pabst, Head of School of politics and international relations, University of Kent (UK);
- Prof. Simon Reich, Division of Global Affairs, Political Science, Rutgers University, New Jersey;
- Prof. Naciye Selin Şenocak, Director of Diplomatic and Strategic Studies Center;
- Dr. Rupert Graf Strachwitz, Chairman of the Board, Maecenata Foundation, Director, Maecenata Institute for Philanthropy and Civil Society;
- Prof. Diane Tussie, Director of the International Relations Area at FLACSO, Argentina;
- Mr. Ruben Vardanyan, President of LLC VARDANYAN, BROITMAN AND PARTNERS, Co-Founder of RVVZ Foundation;
- Dr. Heloise Weber, Senior Lecturer at School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland;
- Dr. Martin Weber, Senior Lecturer at School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland.

Appendix 3: A Brief note on the method of the Delphi survey

We chose respondents who are experts and stakeholders from civil society, politics, academia, and business, with a special focus on those who work directly with the UN or receive UN support for their initiatives. In order to ensure that our findings truly represent the opinions and ideas of the world, we ensured that respondents from all regions were included. For the first round of the survey, our research team developed a series of three open-ended questions. With a response rate of approximately 20% (120 responses out of 500 who were contacted to participate), we had a rich data set to work with. Upon receiving the responses from the first round, we identified trends and synthesised the information to develop a second set of five questions that were narrower in focus and reflected the direction of the first round of responses. The second set of questions were then sent to those who responded in the first round. This method aims to reduce the range of responses and reach something close to an expert consensus. The second-round response rate was even higher, at over 40%.

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