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Citation
Durch, W., Larik, J. E., & Ponzio, R. (2025). Just security and global governance: from UN75 to the Pact for the Future, and on to UN100. *Fletcher Forum Of World Affairs*, *49*(2), 305-327. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4309793

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Leiden University Non-exclusive license
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4309793

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Just Security and Global Governance: From UN75 to the Pact for the Future, and on to UN100

William Durch, Joris Larik, and Richard Ponzio

ABSTRACT

In this article, as part of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs'* 50th anniversary issue, we revisit the main assessment and recommendations from our Winter 2020 *Fletcher Forum* piece entitled "Reinvigorating Global Governance Through 'Just Security.'" We reflect on how world affairs and global challenges have evolved in the past five years, painting an overall even more daunting picture. At the same time, we show how the discourse around, and to some extent, changes in global governance reform debates, have moved significantly during this period, culminating in the September 2024 Pact for the Future. We contend that in this environment, the quest for security and justice through global governance only becomes more urgent, that the Pact can be a universal platform for pursuing this goal further, and—looking further ahead—that the momentum for innovation needs to be sustained if the 100th anniversary of the United Nations in 2045 is to be a cause of celebration rather than of wistful remembrance.

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INTRODUCTION

When our article "Reinvigorating Global Governance Through 'Just Security'" was submitted to *The Fletcher Forum* in late 2019, we identified an "anti-multilateralist turn" in world affairs,[1] exacerbating further a "crisis of global governance."[2] At that time, Donald Trump was president of the United States, "COVID-19" was still an unknown term, Angela Merkel was both Chancellor of Germany and a pillar of European unity, catastrophic bushfires were scorching southern and eastern Australia, and artificial intelligence (AI) was coiling just out of public sight.

At the time of the present article's submission, global challenges have mostly grown. As of early 2025, COVID-19 has infected nearly 780 million people globally, Angela Merkel has retired, and Germany, like many European countries, is grappling with the rise of far-right political power. The fires, this time pushed by gale-force winds, scorched Los Angeles County, California. AI is seemingly everywhere, spreading to search engines, phone apps, and weapon systems. Adding to the seismic global shifts since the initial article, the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues, Israel's furious response to attacks by Hamas had almost totally destroyed Gaza, and Donald Trump has become president again and has set about unravelling traditional pillars of U.S. foreign policy such as foreign aid, security alliances, a liberal rules-based world order, and the United States' own system of governmental checks and balances.

Both then and now, we posit that humanity's most pressing challenges can only be met through a governance structure that delivers on both security and justice, and puts them in a mutually reinforcing relationship. We call this "just security," meaning "that any solution to a global problem must address both security and justice concerns, without privileging one over the other, in order to have any prospect of lasting success."

Both then and now, we posit that humanity's most pressing challenges can only be met through a governance structure that delivers on both security and justice, and puts them in a mutually reinforcing relationship. We call this "just security," meaning "that any solution to a global problem must address both security and justice concerns, without privileging one over the other, in order to have any prospect of lasting success."[3] The calls for a "just peace" for Ukraine, underwritten by credible security guarantees,[4] is

just one illustration of how the relationship between justice and security continues to be at the heart of current debates in global affairs.

As our contribution to this special edition celebrating the 50th anniversary of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, we look deeper at these different dimensions of human experience over the past five years before assessing what became of a selection of our principal recommendations from 2019 in the pursuit of just security, taking into account in particular the developments of the United Nations' 75th anniversary (in 2020) and the Summit of the Future (2024). We subsequently offer some forward-looking ideas building on that Summit's results and look ahead to the next decades of world affairs. While the challenges are daunting, we contend that progress and momentum are visible, and that innovation and adaptation will be central to the UN's future as an entity that can "save humanity from hell"—and itself from the scourge of irrelevance—by continuing to deliver on both security and justice.[5]

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Challenges over the last five years exposed fissures in global public health capacity and in support for multilateral institutions, management of the climate crisis, governance of emerging technology, and the sustainability of international peace and security. We address each below.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Between 2020 and 2025, COVID infected an estimated 776 million people worldwide, and killed 7 million; the United States and China led the world in numbers of reported cases (103 million and 99 million, respectively); 1.2 million Americans died (about 3,600 deaths per million population), while China reported just 122,000 COVID deaths (86 per million).[6] The application of messenger RNA (mRNA) technology to COVID vaccine development paralleled more traditional developmental efforts using attenuated or inactivated viruses and tissue cultures, which take more time to generate.[7] Despite multilateral and multistakeholder efforts to make the vaccines more broadly available globally, vaccine distribution was uneven and varied systematically by level of national income. Governments funding vaccine development laid claim to early tranches of vaccines for their own populations' use, and while those specific vaccines were created and tested quickly, the process built on decades of research.[8] mRNA vaccines must also be stored until use at –70°C degrees or colder, and such facilities are not universally available, further compounding challenges to global vaccine availability.[9]

COVID-19 disrupted both global supply chains and local economies, where lockdowns or remote work orders disrupted normal patterns of buying, selling, work, and recreation. Wealthier governments like the United States distributed emergency cash to keep their economies from crashing. Trillions of dollars in government stimulus payments, intended to support both business and consumption, led to inflationary results in many wealthier economies.[10]

Individuals born after 1975 in the western industrial world had little to no prior experience of inflation as adults.[11] So when the grievances of unexpectedly high and rising costs of living combined with the frustrations of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, populist and nationalist leaders gained an even broader audience, though not greater success in managing the pandemic. Touchton et al. concluded that "no country with populist leadership performed well in either applying public health measures or achieving desirable health outcomes."[12] The growing presence of social media in daily life, and the anonymity it offers to even poorly sourced or ill-reasoned critiques contributed to the ongoing decline in public faith in institutions and in traditional sources of individual awareness of the wider world, including newspapers and network television news, facilitating the populists' rise.[13]

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Climate Change

People all over the world have also more viscerally experienced the impacts of climate change, as the pace of global warming has continued to exceed the expectations of global climate models. Global greenhouse gas emissions, which were knocked back for a year during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, have rebounded, outpacing even recent scientific estimates of the pace of climate change. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that exceeding the 1.5°C warming threshold will lead to irreversible damage to vulnerable ecosystems.[14] Initially projected to be crossed between 2030 and 2052, a

In short, the modest climate change mitigation efforts undertaken to date have not prevented humanity's home from overshooting a critical warming threshold far sooner than expected.

2023 analysis using AI suggested it could occur as early as 2033 to 2035.[15] By 2024, the Earth's average surface temperature had already reached 1.47°C, surpassing 1.5°C for much of the year.[16] In short, the modest climate change mitigation efforts undertaken to date have not prevented humanity's home from overshooting a critical warming threshold far sooner than expected. Even before Donald Trump once again pulled the United States out of the Paris Agreement, its implementation was lagging. The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Azerbaijan in November 2024, ended "with only modest climate finance goals, failed to deliver on an expected announcement of a new commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions," and could not agree to "transition away" from fossil fuels. Moreover, the agreement to "mobilize USD 300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries" would provide just 12 to 13 percent of the estimated need for climate-related support to those countries over the same period. [17]

Artificial Intelligence

If AI had legs, it would be galloping. Research from the International Association of Privacy Professionals found that, as of mid-2024, over 70 percent of organizations relied at least somewhat on third-party AI.[18] Our World in Data estimates that the total number of "large-scale AI systems" in use around the world in 2020 was four; in 2023, 68; and by the end of 2024, 280: a "hockey stick" curve even sharper than that for atmospheric carbon dioxide.[19]

Large-scale AI refers to the joining of "generative AI" with Large Language Models to produce such offspring as Open AI's ChatGPT in its rapidly evolving iterations.[20] Northeastern University's Michael Bennett argues that critical dimensions of AI's growing pervasiveness will include altering "speed of life" (it is accelerating); broad efficiency gains in the workplace (driven in part by fears of falling behind competitors); the end of privacy ("AI systems will likely become much more knowledgeable about each of us than we are about ourselves"); and a "thicket of AI law."[21]

On the last point about expanding AI rules, Lois Tullo at Toronto's Global Risk Institute notes that initial regulatory efforts are spotty and not well-coordinated. The European Union's (EU) *Artificial Intelligence Act,* for example, "provides a comprehensive legal framework that prioritizes the protection of citizens' rights, and sets stringent standards for high-risk AI systems," but it could also stifle innovation. Canada's proposed *Artificial Intelligence and Data Act* "strikes a balance between fostering innovation and protecting against the systemic risks of AI," but is still pending in

Parliament. In the United States (*before* the Biden-Trump transition) there "is a lack of a consistent federal approach to AI risks" and fragmentation across states risks creating gaps in consumer protection.[22] In other words, AI may be galloping ahead but public policy is not even in harness.

Receding Multilateralism and Rising Isolationism

In 2023, the Stimson Center released the first Global Governance Index, developed with the Institute for Economics & Peace, to evaluate individual nations' "ability and inclination to better manage global public goods."[23] The Index primarily examined the Group of Seven (G7, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, plus the EU) and BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which together represent about 51 percent of the world's population and 70 percent of global GDP.[24]

The four most powerful states in the Index—China, India, Russia, and the United States, a group that includes three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—were judged least inclined to turn toward global institutions for problem-solving.[25] China and India were the most global institution-oriented on one dimension of the Index: peace and security, owing in particular to their large contributions of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations (roughly 5,000 and 2,500, respectively).[26] Russia and the United States were scored the least globally oriented on the peace and security dimension, contributing just 44 and 17 uniformed personnel to UN operations, respectively, as of January 2025.[27]

The four big states clustered lower on the remaining Global Governance Index subareas of pandemic response, environmental leadership, human rights, and "global citizenship,"[28] while Japan and the European members of the G7 were seen as more globally inclined on all of these issues.[29] Japan and Europe are both proximate to large, powerful, and very territorial-oriented neighbors (Russia and China), and rely on global trade for a significant chunk of their economic well-being. They are also functionally democratic entities.

Even in the EU, though, right-wing nationalist parties and politicians have made continued inroads, including in Germany (AfD) and France (the National Rally), and have formed governments in some countries, adding to earlier successes in Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland.[30] Several of these movements have abandoned calls for their countries to leave the EU and have instead attempted to collaborate on a "far-right" version of the European project, hallmarks of which are a very strict approach

to migration and reorienting development aid toward national objectives and away from issues such as climate policy and multilateral cooperation.[31] In the United States, the effective merger of Donald Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement with the Republican Party led to victory in the November 2024 U.S. elections. As promised, on his first day in office, Trump signed a raft of Executive Orders intended to bring the U.S. federal government to heel and staff it with appointees owing primary loyalty to the president. U.S. relations with global institutions also took early hits, as the process of withdrawing once again from the World Health Organization, UN Human Rights Council, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, and the Paris Climate Agreement was started.[32]

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An overarching economic concern, as Trump resumed the presidency, was the extent to which the United States would implement his promised use of tariffs on friend and foe alike to pursue national interests. That concern bloomed into worldwide anger in late March 2025, as the White House imposed the promised penalties "*tous azimuts*," only to overshadow them on April 3 with steep "reciprocal" tariffs that crashed global stock markets, rattled bond markets, and led to several U.S.-China "sumo rounds" that pushed mutual tariff postures past 100 percent.[33] There are substantial risks that—notwithstanding the ninety-day "pause" on some of Trump's levies as of this writing—continued economic combat will not just damage trade relationships but choke global trade flows and volumes, leading to higher prices of imported and domestic products alike, and potentially to serious recession.[34]

Warfare and Displacement

A core goal of multilateral cooperation is conflict prevention and resolution. However, in February 2022, the first large-scale mechanized war of territorial aggression in Europe since 1945 broke out as Russian forces invaded Ukraine in strength, after already illegally annexing Crimea in 2014.[35] Under

the Biden administration, the U.S. government and allies provided intelligence support to Ukraine's defense as well as supplies of weapon systems, some generously (e.g., anti-tank missiles) and some after years of delay (e.g., fighter jets and longer-range ballistic and cruise missiles).[36]

The war forced members of NATO to face up to the reality of a hostile Russia. This meant deciding where else they could source the gas for their national distribution networks, what weapons they could afford to part with, and whether NATO members' production capacities for ammunition could support a sustained, artillery-dominant campaign not seen since the First World War (1914–1918).[37] This shock has led to increasing defense budgets in many European countries and various new initiatives in the EU to bolster defense production.[38] As U.S. support for Ukraine, materially and diplomatically, has become highly uncertain, this trend is gaining further momentum, with the EU calling for a "once-in-a-generation surge in European defence investment."[39] However, Ukraine itself, despite a punishing bombardment of its civilian infrastructure, pushed the envelope of military technology by developing swarms of guided drones, some for reconnaissance and others for attack, in an electronic-cum-kinetic measure-countermeasure competition that is shaping how other militaries view future conflict and the risks to legacy systems.[40]

Sustained, industrial-scale warfare also came to the Middle East in October 2023, started this time by a brutal attack on Israeli territory and citizens by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas—the de facto authority in the Gaza Strip. Israel suffered about 1,200 persons—mostly civilians—killed, 5,400 injured, and 253 taken hostage in the initial attack.[41] Its subsequent military campaign largely destroyed Gaza's infrastructure over the next fifteen months, killing roughly 48,000 Palestinians, injuring some 111,700, and displacing 1.9 million, many multiple times.[42] Fighting spread to Lebanon, as Hezbollah's Iran-sponsored militia supported Hamas with missile strikes into northern Israel, which in turn occupied southern Lebanon and substantially weakened Hezbollah. Ceasefires in Lebanon and Gaza took effect shortly before the presidential transition in the United States but Israel resumed attacks on Gaza in April.[43]

Most conflicts spawn displacement, and the global number of persons forcibly displaced grew in the last five years to a record 122.6 million, tripling since 2011.[44] In addition to the displacements in Gaza, the Russia-Ukraine war has added an estimated 10.6 million (6.9 million as refugees and 3.7 million internally).[45] Of the five conflicts that contributed 40 percent of the global number of displaced persons, only Syria showed a decent chance

of resolution as of this writing, with the ouster of the long-ruling al-Assad family from power in late 2024 by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militia, its establishment of a new government, and the relaxing of some Western sanctions on the country.[46]

While global challenges continue to rise in urgency, the "anti-multilateralist turn" we flagged in 2019 has not proven to be a short-lived episode, but a pervasive sentiment, which can and does take hold of powerful governments.

While global challenges continue to rise in urgency, the "anti-multilateralist turn" we flagged in 2019 has not proven to be a short-lived episode, but a pervasive sentiment, which can and does take hold of powerful governments. All of this only makes what UN Secretary General António Guterres coined the "paradox" of global governance even more acute: "international cooperation is more needed than ever but also harder to achieve."[47] At the same time, however, the discussion around reforming the multilateral system has also evolved significantly in the past years, including on some of the reform proposals for which we have been advocating.

JUST SECURITY AND THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

One way to evaluate our policy and institutional reform proposals for enhancing justice and security in global governance from our Winter 2020 article in *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* is to assess any progress in their deliberation and possible adoption at the September 2024 Summit of the Future, which was attended by heads of state and government and other senior representatives from the UN's 193 Member States. These proposals were grouped around the themes of coping with state fragility and violent conflict, climate and people, and governing the hyperconnected global economy. All aimed to reform the existing global governance structures and to help deliver better results in the face of the anti-multilateralist turn. In this section, we revisit a selection of our earlier proposals, and examine the extent to which our thinking is reflected in the chief outcome document of the Summit: the Pact for the Future.[48]

Security Council Reform: Nearing the Once Elusive Breakthrough?

A long-standing and intractable topic of global governance reform concerns the UN Security Council, both in terms of its membership and its way of

operating. In our 2020 *Fletcher Forum* article, we noted that the Security Council's composition and way of working are prime examples of the entanglement of security and justice. We wrote:

> "The more it is regarded as unrepresentative, the less legitimacy it will command, thus leading to the creeping erosion of the collective security system—one of the most significant achievements in the post-World War Two international order."[49]

In its Actions 39–41, the Pact for the Future moved the ball forward more overtly than in past negotiations, proposing to redress past historical injustices against Africa and "other underrepresented and unrepresented regions and groups, such as Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean."[50] The Pact further spotlights the need to limit the scope and use of the P-5's veto authority.[51] With a view to enhancing accountability of permanent Security Council members, it also should be noted that an initiative led by Liechtenstein was adopted in the General Assembly in 2022 requiring its president to convene a formal meeting of the 193-member body within ten working days of a P-5 member casting of a veto and to hold a debate on the situation.[52]

Capitalizing on the momentum achieved during last year's Summit of the Future, progress now depends on the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform (IGN) and whether long overdue deliberations can finally commence on a "consolidated model"—negotiating text that reflects ideas from multiple individual states and groupings of states—combining the best and most acceptable ideas in the following five clusters of issues: i) relationship between the Security Council and General Assembly; ii) size of an enlarged Security Council and the working methods of the Council; iii) categories of membership; iv) the question of the veto; and v) regional representation.[53]

As in the past, meaningful Security Council reforms will come down to whether veto-wielding P5 members are finally open to measures that expand the Council's representative legitimacy, while curbing veto use—at the very least in cases involving the threat of or actual mass atrocities.

As in the past, meaningful Security Council reforms will come down to whether veto-wielding P5 members are finally open to measures that expand the Council's representative legitimacy, while curbing veto use—at the very least in cases involving the threat of or

actual mass atrocities. Progress on these two fronts is likely to hinge on reductions in tensions among the P-5, and their finding common ground to address the underlying causes of violence, especially regarding the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Hamas wars. While a leap forward in terms of reform seems elusive in the current political climate, the pressure from the international community is mounting, seeing also the increasingly explicit language on this issue in official documents like the Pact for the Future, questioning more and more the legitimacy of the current setup.

A New Vehicle to Drive Global Economic Coordination

To avert future global financial shocks (akin to the 2008–2009 worldwide financial crisis) and deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2015 Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance proposed transforming the Group of 20 (G20) forum of large economies into a "G20+" within a new framework for global economic cooperation.[54] Supported by a modest secretariat, the G20+ would strengthen institutional cooperation between the G20 and the United Nations (including the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and regional organizations on fundamental issues of global economic governance such as tax cooperation and restructuring sovereign debt.

As elaborated in our Winter 2020 *Fletcher Forum* article, the notion of a G20+ builds directly on the thinking of a member of our Commission, Professor José Antonio Ocampo, who along with Professor Joseph Stiglitz, called earlier for a "Global Economic Coordination Council."[55] Operating through a constituency system like the Bretton Woods institutions with economically weighted votes, it could identify overlapping areas of global economic responsibility that need high-level political attention, such as, for instance, the environmental effects of trade policies and the social effects of budgetary policies. By boosting justice through greater representation and inclusiveness, a Global Economic Coordination Council would make a significant contribution to the economic dimension of just security.

In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recommended a Biennial Summit akin to the G20+, "at the level of heads of State and Government between the members of the G20 and the members of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of the international financial institutions to work toward a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy."[56] Such a summit could prioritize long-term, innovative financing for the Sustainable Development Goals,

more flexible research and development incentives, and strengthening the international debt architecture.[57]

The Pact for the Future also supported the idea of a Biennial Summit in order to strengthen "systemic links and coordination between the United Nations and the international financial institutions" and to improve "inclusive participation" in global economic governance.[58] This endorsement should be read together with the series of action points in the Pact for the overhaul of the global economic and financial system, which would benefit from an integrated, effective, and legitimate forum to drive the implementation of these action points.

The first Biennial Summit for the global economy—which is anticipated to convene initially in September 2025 as part of the UN General Assembly's High-Level Week—is poised to drive and help realize all six of the detailed international financial architecture actions (Pact Actions 47-52) adopted at last year's Summit of the Future. Hence, this is an innovation that is taking shape.

The Peacebuilding Commission and Conflict Prevention

Finally, our earlier *Fletcher Forum* article built on a third recommendation of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance to transform the UN Peacebuilding Commission into an empowered Council—similar to the Human Rights Commission's upgrade in 2005–2006 (during UN60)—with new coordination authorities, new financial and knowledge resources, and a new focus on prevention, including through new "peacebuilding audits."[59] The upgraded Peacebuilding Council could lead on second and third-order conflict situations, where the UN Blue Helmets and other external military actors are noticeably absent, thereby helping to overcome the Commission's largely mixed record of success in preventing the outbreak or recurrence of deadly conflict and unburdening the Security Council without undercutting its principal authority.

The peacebuilding audit mechanism, as suggested originally by Cedric de Coning and Necla Tschirgi, is one way to link security and justice considerations more tightly in the service of building more sustainable peace,[60] a new tool comparable to the Human Rights Council's country reporting mechanism known as the Universal Periodic Review. By obligating all countries to have their early warning indicators monitored, such audits could help to muster greater resources and political attention for structural prevention by shining a light and reinforcing the security and conflict aspects of international development assistance, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Action 44 of the Pact for the Future puts wind in the political sails of the United Nations 2025 review of its peacebuilding architecture "to bring a more strategic approach and greater coherence and impact to national and international peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts."[61] We are less sanguine, however, that ambitious steps to strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission will follow from that review. This is due largely to the fraught geopolitical context (Ukraine-Russia, Middle East, South China Sea, etc.) and the fact that the P-5 are likely to continue to staunchly guard their Charter-protected privileges. However, if Security Council reforms continue to languish in the coming years, political pressures may mount—especially among major countries seeking permanent or renewable status on the Council—for the kinds of transformative UN peacebuilding and preventive action reform proposals we have championed over the past decade.

In sum, though the recent Summit of the Future has generated new momentum and political openings for achieving long-sought global governance reforms (by UN Member States and scholars alike) in the areas of collective security, economic governance, and peacebuilding, success is by no means assured. With an eye to the next half-century, overcoming spoilers and other long-standing bottlenecks to progress may require, in some cases, new ways of thinking about just security and extending beyond the Pact for the Future agenda endorsed at last September's summit—a concluding topic to which we now turn.

JUSTICE AND SECURITY POST-2025

Having reviewed the past five years, momentum for reforms is clearly building, with many now endorsed officially by the international community in the Pact of the Future. However, a lot of work remains to be done in an increasingly challenging environment as outlined in our introduction. Contemplated through the lens of just security, both justice and security are in short supply, with national security often being used as a justification for unilateral and often illegal action.[62] At the same time, there is reason for some modest hope, not just due to the platform and momentum created by the Pact for the Future, but also due to

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varying coalitions of state and non-state actors lining up to push this agenda forward.[i]

This third section endeavors to shed some light on the future, first turning to the next five years as the Summit's immediate aftermath, then to the next fifty years, which will include the UN Centennial (UN100) in 2045.

The Next Five Years: Waiting for Impact

The Pact for the Future does not provide a roadmap for its own implementation. It would indeed be a declaration of bankruptcy for the multilateral system if it was simply left by the wayside. Realistically, it is of course unlikely that all its action points will be fully implemented. At the same time, it equally is unlikely that the stakeholders that shepherded them into the document will not use the Pact as a platform to push for their implementation.

The main champions for taking the Pact forward are the UN Secretary-General and the Secretariat, who have shown leadership and stamina driving this effort from the UN75 Declaration and *Our Common Agenda* report through to the successful completion of the Summit.[63] While incumbent UN Secretary-General Guterres is certainly invested, his term will end at the end of 2026. For his successor, and the campaigns that will seek to influence this process, it will be beneficial to keep the focus on the Pact's implementation rather than to reinvent the wheel with another conceptual effort.

In addition, crucially, various groupings of states will continue to rally behind certain proposals, including for UN Security Council reform as noted above. They will gain in both punch and legitimacy if they include countries from both the Global North and South. In a general climate of tension, distrust, and anti-multilateral sentiment, multilaterally oriented states and blocs, such as the EU and the African Union, can benefit by relying on the Pact as a common denominator to which all UN members are committed. Additionally, through Spain and Costa Rica's leadership in co-facilitating the Global Digital Compact follow-through from the Summit of the Future, steady progress becomes possible on critical innovations in AI governance, including the establishment of a multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and Global Dialogue on AI Governance.[64] Apart from (inter)governmental actors, civil society will

i. For instance, the Singapore-led, thirty-member country Global Governance Group (3G) is lending its support to Pact for the Future implementation, uniting both small and medium-sized states in collective resistance to steps that may erode multilateral institutions, including by retreating into bilateral alliances.

also continue to push for the Pact's implementation, organized through multistakeholder "ImPact Coalitions"[65] that are already taking shape.

The following half decade will conclude with 2030, the endpoint of the current Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda can be considered a platform of universal commitment at least as strong as the Pact for the Future, with measurable targets and some progress (though far from satisfactory) to show for.[66] Seeing the achievement of the SDGs and the Pact's action points as a combined and mutually supportive effort will avoid efforts to play one off against the other.

To the extent that diverse actors can work together, not operating within their own silos and on their respective interests, using the Pact and the 2030 Agenda as a common platform would be the epitome of "inclusive, networked, and accountable" global governance exhorted in contemporary global governance discourse.[67] For these actors to stand up to hostile great power behavior or powerful non-state actors—including individual actors in the form of politically active tech billionaires—will be a very tall order. But this prospect only makes the case for unity stronger, and suggests attempting to work with such actors wherever possible rather than antagonize them. The quest for solutions that cater to *both* more security and more justice could prove a useful argument for bringing actors with diverse interests on board.

Beyond the ideas that made it into the Pact for the Future and the accompanying Summit outcome documents, there were other ideas for strengthening justice and security in the world that did not make the cut, yet remain powerful and whose time may yet come. Examples include the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Network, or improved cooperation between the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court in the form of a protocol.[68] With the Pact being a non-legally binding document, it can always be updated by endorsement of the UN General Assembly, which could be attempted in the coming years, starting with UN80 in 2025. The Pact should indeed be considered "a floor, not a ceiling, for the stepped up cooperation we need in a turbulent world."[69]

The Next Fifty Years: UN100+

At the risk of becoming highly speculative, it seems appropriate to end our analysis for this 50th anniversary issue of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* by looking at the next half century of justice and security in global governance.

The monumental milestone that sits close to the middle of the next half century is 2045, the 100th anniversary of the United Nations. Barring

some cataclysmic conflict, it is unlikely (though of course not impossible), that the organization will have disappeared by then, in which case October 24, 2045, would become a day of remembrance only. Should it still exist, it will have undergone sufficient change, formal or informal, to still be relevant, and to avoid having become a sort of world-spanning Holy Roman Empire in its latter stages.

The Holy Roman Empire, launched in the year 800 by Charlemagne, continued to exist for a millennium, though its final decades were marked by sheer irrelevance in Europe, with powerful nation states having taken over, and Napoleon finally putting it out of its misery in 1806.[70] Perhaps this would be an even more tragic fate than that suffered by the League of Nations and its formal dissolution. The United Nations would continue to exist, though increasingly underfunded and with powerful states checking out of important parts of the system. It would slowly slide into oblivion, as no one would look up to it any more as a forum or as an actor to deliver on the most fundamental requirements of human society—justice and peace.

Thus, while not all the action points of the Pact for the Future, or all the prominent ideas for reform, would have to be implemented to spare the UN this demise, enough progress must be shown in the delivery of these core public goods to stay relevant. The UN never was, nor claimed to be, the universal expression of global governance. Rather, it was always presented as the center of a wider multilateral system.

Regarding states, we might face a multipolar world dominated by a few very powerful, technologically advanced great powers or fragmented communities of states along the fault lines of liberal versus authoritarian or Global North versus Global South. However, given how far economic interdependence and globalization has progressed in the past decades, even such a fractured international society will have a hard time reshaping the world into a small number of walled gardens in terms of supply chains and connectivity. This is all the more so given AI's recent growing role in accelerating and deepening our hyperconnected global economy, further amplifying calls for an enhanced governance role for the United Nations and related global bodies and approaches.[71] This kind of discourse is designed to expand the potential benefits of powerful AI and other cyber technologies for all nations and peoples while, simultaneously, mitigating their risks.

Beyond the setup of the Security Council, so much else in the design of the UN system and other global institutions reflects a geopolitical snapshot of the world in 1945. The UN, as the central element to global governance, will need to accurately reflect this contemporary world, which will evolve farther and farther away from 1945, if it wants to stay relevant and

legitimate. In other words, that system can only be perceived as just to the extent that it is representative and provides a forum and other remedies for all actors. Moreover, to keep the world secure, that system will need at least some agency and tools in making a tangible contribution toward conflict prevention and resolution. While great power conflict will continue to be contained, more through sundry forms of interest, power, and deterrence than by the UN, there will likely be no shortage of other smaller-scale interstate and civilian conflicts in which the UN can play an even more significant conflict prevention, management, and resolution role.

Moreover, to provide for human security and development in a broader sense, or in other words, to achieve "positive peace," the UN still retains enormous potential. The challenge in that respect will lie in agreeing on a follow-up to the 2030 Agenda (perhaps "Global Sustainability Goals" or "Integrated Socioeconomic and Environmental Goals"), leading up to the UN Centennial in 2045; goals that are in line with the severity of challenges faced by mid-century societies, including through the increasing effects of climate change.

In sum, whether we are looking five years or fifty years ahead, the need to innovate will remain existential for the UN and wider global governance architecture. In that endeavor, and for each reform idea, the overarching goal of how they effectively advance justice and security must not be left out of sight.

CONCLUSION

The past five years have been a tumultuous time in world politics and in the discourse on the reform of the multilateral system. While we were already calling it the "crisis of multilateralism" in 2020, the subsequent deterioration of the political climate (and the actual climate) and the outburst of kinetic and hybrid warfare are now painting an even gloomier picture. It is also against this backdrop that the adoption of the Pact of the Future in 2024 must be seen as a success and a measure of the resilience of the broad range of actors still committed to multilateral governance. Beyond actors, and in a world where a "battle of the narratives" is now raging, the process from the UN75 Declaration until the Pact is also a "battle of ideas." We see our own work and that of other think tank experts, scholars, and policymakers actively engaged in reform discussion as continuing to feed into this struggle for the future of global governance. While actual reform is a slow process, it can and does still happen, as evidenced by the Biennial Summit for the Global Economy. For others, momentum is building.

The coming five years will be crucial for the implementation of the Pact for the Future, in lockstep with the Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will be for the Pact's champions to not only preach inclusive, effective, and networked governance, but also to practice; for it is their best chance at achieving meaningful progress in a daunting environment. The quest for both justice and security can be a powerful argument to build coalitions and turn action points into action. With success, the Pact's implementation can set the UN on a course to celebrating its centennial in 2045 as still being—and continuing to be far beyond that—at the center of global governance, and at the intersection where security and justice are delivered to a world in dire need.

NOTES

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