

The United Nation's double roles in the Ukraine¹

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Abstract

Generally, when one thinks about the United Nations (which is not very often) one tends to think of the institution as a whole. One thinks of the United Nations. Any positive or negative thoughts about it tend to taint the whole Organization. One either likes or dislikes the UN as a whole. And, because most media focus is on the big news and the big events, then most of our thoughts are dominated by the activities of the Security Council. And because most of the news is about the Big Five vetoing each other's proposals then we are left with the impression that the UN gets nothing done, that it is not very useful. Through a revision of the case of the current war in Ukraine, the purpose of this essay is to show that this is neither correct nor helpful.

Keywords: United Nations, roles, Ukraine

Resumen

Generalmente, cuando se piensa en las Naciones Unidas (que no es muy frecuente) se tiende a pensar en la institución como un todo. Uno piensa en la ONU. Cualquier pensamiento positivo o negativo al respecto tiende a manchar a toda la Organización. A uno le gusta o le disgusta la ONU en su conjunto. Y, debido a que la mayoría de los medios se enfocan en las grandes noticias y los grandes eventos, casi todos nuestros pensamientos están dominados por las actividades del Consejo de Seguridad. Y dado que la mayoría de las noticias son sobre los llamados "Cinco Grandes", los cuales vetan las propuestas de los demás, nos queda la impresión de que la ONU no hace nada, que no es muy útil. A través de una revisión del caso de la guerra actual en Ucrania, el propósito de este ensayo es mostrar que esto no es ni correcto ni útil.

Palabras clave: Naciones Unidas, roles, Ucrania

The United Nations is a vast organization with many parts. It works on our behalf every day. Security is only one of its elements. Over the decades, the UN has saved millions of lives through its inoculation and health programs, its mediation and peacekeeping services, and its promulgation of treaties and standards that have improved socio-economic and human rights (Langille, 2022). In this article, I will propose that we divide our analysis of this

¹ A significant part of the ideas of this essay in relation to reforming the Security Council were originally elaborated in my book *A United Nations Renaissance: What the UN is, and what it could be* (Trent, J. & L. Schnurr 2017).

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gigantic enterprise into two parts: the *developmental* activities and the *security* concerns. Because it is the most striking global issue of our times, we will look at each of these two topics with particular reference to what the United Nations has been doing with regard to the war in the Ukraine following the Russian invasion of 2021.

Development and the United Nations

Development is among the three founding pillars of the United Nations along with peace and security and human rights. Much of the work the UN does falls into the broad category of ‘development’. This includes poverty reduction, food security, climate change, gender equality, housing, education, employment, disaster risk reduction, health and emergency response, water and sanitation, crime prevention, good governance and early childhood development (Schnurr, 2018). It is now defined by the UN as *sustainable* development meaning: development that promotes prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social well-being, and protection of the environment (United Nations [UN], 1987). Of course, it is not only the UN, which works to improve human welfare. There are also many NGOs or non-governmental organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, Greenpeace, the World federalists and the Crisis Group, to name just a few. There are now more than 50,000 of them and they are most effective when ‘civil society’ comes together with the UN and other actors in ‘campaign coalitions’. But even by itself the UN has tremendous breadth and diversity as is witnessed by the following list of United Nations agencies, some of which are well recognized in their own right.

Table 1. United Nations Development Group members (excluding regional commissions and secretariat bodies) by year established

Programme/Fund/Specialized Agency	Year
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	1865
International Labour Organization (ILO)	1919
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	1945
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	1945
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)	1946
World Health Organization (WHO)	1948
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	1950
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	1951

Programme/Fund/Specialized Agency	Year
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	1957
World Food Programme (WFP)	1963
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	1964
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	1965
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	1969
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	1972
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	1973
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (merged into a new organization, UN Women, in 2010)	1976
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	1977
United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat)	1978
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	1985
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	1994
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	1997

UN entities established during the 1960s and 1970s to address social, economic and environmental issues

This panoply of agencies gives a clear idea of the breadth and depth of the services the around the world UN offers to humanity including education, telecommunications, science, health, refugees, food, children, drugs and crime. These are just the agencies. There are also around the world more than 100 peacekeeping actions run by the United Nations with more soldiers under arms than most nation-states. In addition, we have all the programs and services of the Secretariat in New York (and Geneva) plus the diplomatic interventions of the Secretary General and the Secretariat and the meetings, debates and activities of the General Assembly. It is to these, which we will now turn and look at them in the context of the war in the Ukraine.

The UN has acted as a political platform for Ukraine and its allies to make a public case against Russia.³ Shortly after the rebuff of the UN Security Council in February 2022 by Russia's veto, the 193-member General Assembly (where all state members have one vote and none has a veto) condemned the war by 141 votes to five. The Assembly also voted to toss Russia out of the Geneva-based Human Rights Council which then went on to open an inquiry that will seek to find credible evidence of war crimes in the Ukraine War.

The American and European allies worked closely together to secure strong resolutions in the UN condemning Moscow for its war in the Ukraine. They worked quietly to persuade

3 I am grateful to an excellent and well-balanced article by Richard Gowan (2022).

China to keep a low profile and sometimes to abstain and to keep diplomacy alive. “Overall, Moscow has seemed inclined to use the Security Council as a channel for residual, if frequently grudging, cooperation with Western powers while other forms of diplomatic engagement wither” (Gowan, 2022). Both countries treated the UN as a forum to get out their side of the propaganda about the war but also keeping up a minimum of diplomatic relations on other major issues aside from the Ukraine. In the meantime, on the other side of the world, it was the United Nations, which still had aid workers in Afghanistan trying to facilitate communication with the Taliban (Levine, 2022).

The UN started by working with the Red Cross to try to open humanitarian routes around the war zones. But often it was too dangerous to organize convoys. Visiting Kyiv in April, Guterres proposed a “humanitarian contact group” to open up corridors, but with little success. By July 2022, the UN still had 1,000 humanitarian staff in Ukraine and with their partners they had brought assistance to 9 million Ukrainians (Levine, 2022).

The Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres has been very vigorous in his diplomacy including his visit to Kyiv to talk to President Zelenskyy about evacuating civilians from Mariupol. His visit was not without danger. Russia fired two long distance missiles into Kiev during Guterres visit, after a period of relative calm (Zinets, 2022a). Although his visits to Moscow were not crowned with great success, his biggest achievement has been working with Turkey to broker a deal between Russia and Ukraine to open up the shipping routes in the Black Sea so that Ukrainian grain could once again flow to the world. The agreement also included opening a path through the sea mines and creating a framework for vessels to safely enter the conflict zone (Zinets, 2022b). Ukraine hopes to export the 20 million tons of grain in its silos and 40 million tons from its 2022 harvest. By the end of August, a large freighter arrived in Ethiopia with enough grain to feed a million people for a month. It is hoped to be the first of many.

This was an important success for the UN because some members were starting to blame the UN and the West for keeping the war going and blocking food supplies. Guterres has been credited with focusing on the talks and mastering details –a “rare diplomatic breakthrough”, the Globe and Mail called it. But Moscow prefers to use his “efforts” rather than his “good offices” which would suppose a greater policy influence (Zinets, 2022b). Gowan concludes that the UN’s influence may have been “marginal” but not “insignificant” and that it has acted as a platform for international public criticism of Moscow, brought some aid to victims and helped keep a lid on some other crises.

Another helping hand from one of the agencies of the United Nations was the arrival in September of representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency at the endangered mega-nuclear energy plant at Zaporizhzhia—the largest nuclear plant in all of Europe. Rafael Grossi, chief of the delegation, told reporters that their mission was

to prevent a nuclear accident. The Russians had captured the plant at the beginning of the war although the Ukrainian work force still toiled to run the facility. The Russian occupiers used it to bombard the Ukrainians in the region. Then the Russians accused the Ukrainians of shelling them. In either case, there was an intense possibility of a nuclear disaster and also the danger of a power outage for the entire region.

With Russian delegates present, the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have addressed Russian atrocities in Ukraine. These include the summary executions of civilians in Bucha and other residential centers and the indiscriminate bombing of Mariupol and Kharkiv and other towns. In determining President Putin's culpability it is noted, to begin with, that he is commander-in-chief of Russia's armed forces and thus we may assume has been regularly briefed. But Putin has declared reports of war crimes to be 'fake'. His leader in Russia is General Aleksandr Dvornikov who directed Russia's war-crime bombing campaign in Syria, including the destruction of Eastern Aleppo. Putin has recently awarded him the Hero of Russia award. Putin has also bestowed honors on the Russian military brigade that has been accused of massacring the civilians in the village of Bucha saying that its "skillful and resolute actions are an example of the performance of military duty, courage, selflessness and high professionalism" (Roth, 2022). It is the International Criminal Court that is already investigating whether Mr. Putin and other senior Kremlin officials knew or should have known of crimes by troops under their command.

Peace and Security

Under the United Nations, the questions of peace and security fall under the Security Council. Only when it is not considering a particular issue can it revert to the General Assembly. In such a circumstance the Uniting for Peace mechanism, developed in 1950 at the time of the Korean War, is put into place so the General Assembly can fill in the profound security gaps left by the Council being blocked by a veto.

One example of the Council not filling its mandate is the fact that instead of creating peace, the world's military expenditures have nearly doubled since 2000. It now amounts to about \$2 trillion per year, more than half of which is from NATO countries. These increases have persisted despite macroeconomic or geopolitical trends. In 2020 for instance –the year 120 million people were pushed into poverty by recession and 98 million people were directly affected by storms, floods and climatic disasters– military expenditures continued to increase by an average of 2.6 percent worldwide (Langille, 2022, p.2).

Despite these harsh trends, the record of the UN (and therefore the much-maligned Security Council) has been quite miraculous:

- 42 peacekeeping forces since 1996;
- Since 1945, negotiating 172 peaceful settlements, ending regional conflicts;
- Giving aid to 30 million refugees since 1951;
- UN agencies have worked to give safe drinking water to 1.3 billion people in rural areas during the past decade;
- After a 13-year effort, smallpox was eradicated from the planet in 1980 (Langille, 2022, p.4).

Nevertheless, security is meant to mean being free from danger or threat. And yet we have another invasion and massive war in Ukraine, there is what amounts to a renewed cold war and nuclear arms race, 100 million people have been displaced by conflict and climate change and there is vast and growing inequality everywhere. In August, at a month-long conference to review the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Secretary-General felt it necessary to warn the world “that humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation” (Lederer, 2022). And yet as regards Ukraine, it has been proposed by two Canadian internationalists that the UN could and should set up a peacekeeping operation with the permission of Ukraine to make sure that humanitarian corridors would be respected (Axworthy & Rock, 2022). Nothing came of the proposal.

The five permanent members of the Security Council (Russia, the United States, Great Britain, France and China) remain divided and are unwilling to support a more effective UN. As another example, the Canadian government has shifted away from an influential role in the UN to a subordinate role in a Western military alliance (NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The Global Peace Index of the Institute for Economics and Peace located in Sydney Australia estimates the level of peacefulness in the world and estimates the economic impact of violence at U.S. \$14.96 trillion annually. At the same time, social security declines and there is less money for education, health care and poverty reduction. Officials in the Biden administration in the U.S. have already informed the UN staff that they are not interested in a UN-centered order, Instead the NATO military alliance is the Americans’ new preferred center of action.

The Security Council is also meant to be the arbiter of international law of which foreign wars are one of the main interdictions. Before the Second World War, the invasion of other states was a fairly common occurrence. Since then, it has been rather rare. One can make the statement that there has been no global war since the beginning of the UN and most of many wars have been ‘civil’, that is limited to one country –but very bloody none-the-less. After that, all the ‘buts’ begin. In the early 1950s there was a huge three-year

war on the Korean peninsula after the 'North' invaded the 'South'. One could almost say it was a 'civil' war but many countries participated, rallied by the United States but fighting under the UN flag. The Americans went on to invade Vietnam and Cambodia –amongst others but used the veto to block condemnation. Great Britain fought Argentina in the Falkland Islands half a world away– although the British claimed it was their territory. 'Everyone' invaded Afghanistan and were kicked out for their pains. Iraq made the mistake of invading little Kuwait. Again, under the leadership of the United States, many countries rallied to the aid of Kuwait and Iraq was rapidly forced to flee. Today, China is threatening to invade Taiwan an independent democracy that it claims is part of China although it has never been governed by the mainland.

And, finally, we have the unprovoked invasion of the Ukraine by Russia. This is the worst international war since World War 2. Ukraine had been forced to almost triple its armed forces from 250,000 to 700,000 by June 2022. It is reported that Russia has had more than 20,000 casualties (Govolin & Ringis, 2022). More than 40 countries joined with the United States in April 2022 at Ramstein Air Base in Germany in a bid to increase their military support for Ukraine –despite Moscow's threat that this could lead to nuclear war (Stewart & Polityuk, 2022). The Security Council attempted to pass a resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine. Russia vetoed it.

So, with this sort of record, it is clear that the United Nations and especially the Security Council must be reformed. If Russia cannot be removed from the Security Council and its current format is unalterable, then Zelenskyy called upon the United Nations to 'dissolve itself all together' (Zelenskyy, 2022). But Russia is not the only fly in the soup. It is to be noted that almost all the invasions since the Second World War have been committed by members of the P5, the very members of the Security Council who are meant to uphold international law.

We may conclude that when it comes to development and humanitarian affairs the UN is fulfilling its mandate with regard to Ukraine. The General Assembly has condemned the invasion and Russia has been thrown off the Human Rights Council. The UN has remained a center for residual debate and diplomacy. The Secretary General has shown determination and leadership. His diplomacy reopened grain trade in the Black Sea. The International Atomic Energy Agency has inspected the Zaporizhzhia nuclear energy facility. Humanitarian aid has been made available. Evidence of Russia's war crimes is being amassed. Nevertheless, war and destruction continues. The UN's record is not negligible but it is not what its founding forecast. With the mandate for peace and security, the UN is simply not working as it should. What can be done to fix it?

Reforming the United Nations

In other places and other times, I have written extensively about how to reform the United Nations (Trent & Schnurr, 2017). Here I present in detail three widely known proposals for strengthening the United Nations that could specifically deal with the Ukrainian crisis. They are all interlocking. This is not to suggest there are no other viable reform proposals available concerning the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, United Nations funding and staffing and criteria for the Responsibility to Protect.

A more legitimate Security Council

One fairly radical but ‘workable’ proposal for restructuring the Security Council is made by Joseph Schwartzberg in his powerful book, *Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World*, (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2013). He recommends a three-pronged approach. First, to surmount national interests and help smaller countries to work through larger groupings, he suggests a system of representation in the Council by 12 world regions rather than individual nation-states. Each multinational region would nominate slates of candidates from which one would be elected to the Security Council by the General Assembly. Second, he proposes a mathematically determined weighted vote for each region. Third, in exchange for phasing out the veto, the P5 would be rewarded with a larger weighted vote in a more empowered General Assembly – a most significant proposal.

Additional new proposals for reforming the Security Council have been made in the 2015 Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance. To achieve the twin goals of effectiveness and acceptability, it is suggested that the Council’s membership be expanded to reflect the tremendous increase in UN membership (as was done in 1965) and that immediate re-election of non-permanent members be allowed. The Commission then proposes ideas for resolving the question of the veto and improving peace operations through improved worked methods.

- Members should be obligated to defend their ‘no’ votes publicly in the Security Council.
- The Five Permanent Members (P5) should be given the option of casting a ‘dissenting vote’ that does not rise to the level of a veto and therefore does not block passage of a resolution.
- The Council should assure sufficient resources and support for new peace operations.
- For each peace operation a ‘Group of Friends’ should be constituted, States that can bring political and diplomatic pressure on the situation.
- Countries supplying troops and police should be consulted by the Council.
- It should undertake a rolling assessment of those terrorist, criminal or extremist

elements that are capable of influencing the context of peace operations.

Finally, in assessing the current requirements for social, economic and legal supports for peace and security, the Commission favors instituting a formal mechanism of consultation for regular, structured discussions between the Security Council and representatives of civil society, business and municipalities. After all, these stakeholders have a demonstrated interest in, and make specific contributions to, the new dimensions of security —health, protection of civilians, women and children, climate change, natural disasters (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

More recently, the State of Liechtenstein proposed a ‘Veto Initiative’ resolution in the General Assembly which was passed with 83 co-sponsors and by every regional group, including the permanent members Britain, France and the US. The goal of the initiative is that when the Council is blocked from acting by a veto, those responsible for the veto will have to defend themselves before the General Assembly. The Russian delegation said it had no desire to join the consensus in favor of the resolution. Since the Cold War ended in 1991, 49 proposals have been blocked by a veto in the Council. Since 2010, 38 vetoes have been cast, blocking 27 draft resolutions: 23 by Russia, 11 by China and 4 by the United States (Donaldson, 2022).

A more balanced and focused General Assembly

While reforming the Security Council is crucial to the future of the United Nations, there are two other UN reforms which would make changes in the Council both more likely and more effective. The General Assembly is the twin of the Security Council and its structure must be designed in a corresponding manner. For the Council to be able to operate effectively it must have the power to act. Let us look at these two requirements.

In his book *Transforming the United Nations System*, Joseph Schwartzberg (2013) tells us that the General Assembly owes its legitimacy to being an almost universal body with 99.6 percent of the world’s people. This population has tripled since 1945, but for all this time the voting power in the General Assembly has steadily been skewed to favor relatively minor states including a proliferation of microstates. No fewer than 39 current members have less than a million inhabitants each, and 13 have fewer than 100,000 inhabitants each (Schwartzberg, 2013). In financial terms, 128 members collectively pay less than 1.3 percent of the total UN budget. If one can be opposed to an ‘undemocratic’ veto then one should be equally opposed to General Assembly coalitions of the very weak. It has been called the ‘immoral egalitarianism’ of the ‘one-member, one-vote’ rule. At present, the three most populous countries (China, India and the United States) have 42 percent of the world’s population but only 1.6 percent of votes in the General Assembly. The major powers must resort to bribery or threats to bend the weak to their demands. Because of these faults, the

biggest states have opted to create the G20 where they can discuss economic matters without being hobbled by what they consider to be the noisy, ‘marginal’ states. A well-designed system of weighted voting would mitigate these defects. The aim, as at the beginning of the UN, should be to combine power with principle (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

The three basic principles for the weighted vote of each member would be: 1) the ‘democratic principle’ in which population is the determining factor; 2) ‘economic capacity’ represented by contributions to the UN budget; and 3) the ‘sovereign equality principle’ whereby each state is treated equally. The three components of the vote would be combined in a simple formula as if they were of equal relevance (Schwartzberg presents the calculations in great detail). Over time, say, every ten years, a neutral agency would adjust these weights according to changed conditions. The aim is that states might start listening to each other. Rather than having weak and poor states pass a plethora of meaningless resolutions that destroy the reputation of the GA and are largely ignored by the rich and powerful, debates could become more consequential (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

Once the voting power within the General Assembly is more balanced, one could proceed to making its operations more focused. Because global problems require global solutions, Schwartzberg argues that the time has come to give the GA limited capacity to pass legally binding resolutions (in areas not being considered by the Security Council). In matters of a worldwide nature that cannot be addressed at the regional or national levels, the GA should be authorized to legislate binding international law when there is a two-thirds majority that includes 50 percent of the total world population. Some issues might require a supermajority of 75 percent of the weighted votes (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

Autonomous emergency services for the UN

It is unlikely that reformed structures alone will be enough to help the United Nations to fulfil its mandate for global protection and development. The organization will also require additional resources to give it the autonomy to carry out its work. One of the leading proponents of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) (Langille, 2017), Peter Langille (2015), has pointed out that UN peacekeepers, over the years, have helped improve conditions in 69 armed conflicts worldwide. The chief problem is that it currently takes 6-12 months for the UN to mount a peace operation – as opposed to the seven days it took to deploy forces to the first UN peacekeeping in the Suez in 1956. In addition, Western countries with their advanced military forces are now only contributing a minimal number of the 120,000 troops the UN has in the field. In part because of this slow reaction, the UN is now spending \$7.5 billion annually on peacekeeping, but only after conflicts have spread, thousands have died and countries have been destroyed (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

Creating a UNEPS would help prevent the spread of conflict along with the ensuing mass atrocities and huge costs. Its principal characteristics would be:

- a permanent standing, integrated UN formation;
- highly trained and well-equipped troops;
- ready for immediate deployment by the Security Council;
- composed of soldiers, police and civilian experts ('multidimensional');
- capable of diverse assignments (e.g., security, environmental and health crises);
- 13,000 to 15,000 professional volunteers;
- equitable regional and gender representation; and
- be a first responder to cover the initial six months until member states can deploy (Langille, 2017).

The central aim of UNEPS would be to deter aggression and its spread. There would be sufficient military forces and police to restore and maintain order and civilian teams to provide essential services. Its approximate start-up costs of \$3 billion and recurring costs of \$1.5 billion annually, while significant, are trifling in comparison to the \$13.6 trillion in annual military expenditures globally (Global Peace Index). A very similar proposal has been presented in great detail by Robert Johansen in "A United Nations Emergency Peace Service: To Prevent Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity" (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

Sequencing reform proposals: where to start

This list of possible transformations of the UN leads immediately to the question: where to start? The aim is to mobilize public and political support for reform so it is placed on the international agenda. Few disagree that the UN must have its own sources of revenue, although many would prefer this to come from some form of taxation. Many also accept the need for some form of emergency peace force. Still, to get these two resources, the organization must have legitimacy. This is why weighted voting is such an important concept. The European Union has used weighted voting and it appears to work quite well. In the context of our global institutions, it could help address the issue of large countries fleeing the cacophony of the UN towards the G7 and G20, in part to have their voices heard for their just value (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

We have come to the conclusion that there are two first steps that must be taken before reforms will get under way. First, the whole issue of reform must be placed on the international agenda. This is going to take considerable leadership, education and communication. Second, overcoming established interests and natural tendencies for maintaining the status quo will require an immense mobilization of popular support to

create political will. In all likelihood this will necessitate the formation of a UN renaissance movement led by civil society.

The introduction to the June 2016 report of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung New York Office, entitled *Reinventing Development: Reforming the UN for People and Planet*, is called ‘Beyond Tinkering’ and states that “Transformational changes are needed to make the UN into a body that advances the public interest through democratic governance and commitment to its founding values... A piecemeal approach won’t get us the UN we need.” There is one common denominator that allows us to go rapidly to the heart of the insidious weakness of global governance. It is the issue of the incapacity of the world to develop policies and take actions to adequately deal with the global challenges that go beyond capacities of any single state. In concrete terms this means giving the UN new institutional capacities.

An insight was provided by Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt in his article “Why do citizens want the UN to decide?” He studied the fifth wave of the World Values Survey and drew the following conclusions about public attitudes toward giving more decisional authority to the United Nations: In general, public support for UN authority is strongly linked to an individual believing that pressing political problems are of a global scope and that the nation-state is unable to handle the major problems of our time.

So as we approach the issue of enhanced global governance, we must be aware that the more people think global challenges surpass the capacities of states, the more they will support global authorities —except when they think present world institutions are skewed in the favor of major powers, then they will demand institutional reform that spreads power more equitably.

It is quite incredible, but for decades now we have had UN reform proposals on the books! They are elegant, practicable, workable – and completely unknown. The problem is the reformers. They have spent too much time analyzing what to reform but have paid little attention to *how to do it*. We have to develop an effective strategy to get institutional transformation on the international agenda.

To dispel the fears of a global leviathan, reformers will have to concentrate on what democracies have learnt about diffusing and controlling power through the techniques of federalism, subsidiarity, decentralization, division of powers, checks and balances, rights and equality, liberalism, the rule of law, participation and decentralization.

We have already referred to the report *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance*, by the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance in 2015. Among its conclusions it stated, “Reforms require a realistic strategy for Advocating Justice and Security together, rooted in a rigorous, ideally shared analysis and harnessing the ideas,

networks, resources, and most of all, leadership of multiple actors to move toward this new vision of global institutions, in other words, concrete steps on how to get from here to there” (104). In his 2007 study on *Modernizing the United Nations*, Trent already called for the creation of campaign coalitions of NGOs. Among the attributes of these ‘smart coalitions’ composed of governmental and non-governmental actors are: ideas, leadership, expertise, skillful negotiations, mobilization of networks and resources, concrete agendas, targets and indicators, and tools to measure progress and respond to setbacks. In terms of personnel, they will require NGO experts, international practitioners, communicators, academics, retired politicians and hopefully some representatives of willing governments. Over time, these coalitions must learn how to change narratives and reframe issues to suit the headlines of the moment. Often, the complex reforms must be organized into manageable, issue-specific areas that can be overseen by actors with specific expertise. These issues must be able to ‘speak’ to the public and the media.

We can learn from the successful coalitions mobilized by the World Federalists Movement to fight for an International Criminal Court, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and 1 for 7 Billion, a campaign to improve the selection of the secretary-general. These campaigns came along when conditions in the General Assembly opened the door to creating momentum for the specific reform. NGOs and governments made use of each other’s relative advantages. NGOs applied their expertise, their ability to inform and frame the discourse, and their means for embarrassing dissenting governments through naming-and-shaming campaigns. Friendly governments used their money and resources to manage negotiations and decision-making. Campaigns were based on a strong and simple normative message. Instead of meeting opposite governments head-on (even the P5), the coalitions moved around them through the support of a strong majority of states (Trent & Schnurr, 2017).

A reform movement will most likely start when a small number of like-minded states and numerous civil society organizations, with sophisticated communications skills and leaders, can mobilize widespread support over a sufficient period of time in favor of a UN with adequate authority.

Conjecture (rather than conclusions)

We have seen that despite strenuous efforts, the United Nations as it presently stands has been able to do little about the war in Ukraine. We know why. The Russian veto will not allow the Security Council to intervene. So, we must wonder whether anything can be done about the veto. Which leads us to another whole series of questions.

We must recall why we have a veto in the first place. When the UN was founded, at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, the major world powers insisted on having a

veto so no one could interfere in their 'vital internal affairs' —little did anyone expect this would become broadened to include their total foreign policy, No veto —no UN. It was needed both to get agreement but also to stop the major powers from jumping ship as soon as something happened with which they disagreed. The other countries felt obliged to go along with the veto for the Permanent Five Powers.

The question today is whether the situation is the same as it was in 1945. Do all the other countries in the UN have to accept the veto of the P5? Have things changed since 1945? One obvious change is that there are now eight nuclear weapons states —and probably Israel as a ninth. Should India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel also have the veto? One would think not. Therefore, nuclear weapons are not the only reason for a veto. By the same reasoning, one might ask if all the P5 should still have a veto? It could be argued that only Russia, China and the United States have the global power and the nuclear weapons delivery capacity to imply that they are distinctive from the other states who must fall into line with their demands. Another change is that the number of nuclear weapons has greatly declined from about 40,000 in 1970, to about 13,000 at the present, thanks in part to the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 and the Test-Ban Treaty of 1996. Now however, states like China, Russia and the United States and several others also have tactical nuclear warheads for battlefield use that are not subject to the treaties.

There are other strategic and tactical changes to the capacities of nuclear states. Russia claims to have 'hyper' speed weapons that cannot be stopped by the Americans or others. But Russia now must contest with not only the US but also the 30 members of NATO which surround it. Any threats it makes must be multinational. This puts a great strain on Putin's recent threat that he had, "placed his nuclear deterrent weapons on high alert". How much of a threat is this? Can he threaten to destroy others without at the same time destroying himself? What about the fact that there are some 230 B61 nuclear gravity bombs already located in NATO countries (Belgium, Turkey, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands) surrounding parts of Russia's periphery. Putin is not just dealing with the United States. In any case, the United States has by far the greatest nuclear delivery capacity of any country including Russia. In other words, there is no comparison between Putin's nuclear threats and those of his rivals. Does this make a difference or does just one nuclear bomb do the deal? What is the utility of nuclear threats if, in practice they cannot be carried out?

So, our conjecture leads us to another question. Is it not time for the rest of the countries of the world to simply say to the P5 enough is enough? We need a workable UN so the veto must go and we must debate other institutional reforms, reforms that would give the large nations greater authority over all. It is likely that Great Britain and France would acquiesce, and perhaps even the United States given its adherence to the Liechtenstein veto initiative. For the rest, our conjecture suggests that Putin's nuclear menace is more

bluff than reality. He can either come along or go alone. And, in the new globalized world going alone is not a winning proposition. The world's countries are inextricably linked to each other.

Finally, our conjecture leads us to one final question. In practical terms, what should be our specific objective to advance UN reform? Well, surprisingly enough the answer is to be found in the statutes of the United Nations, in Chapter XVIII on Amendments, Article 109, paragraph 3, states that “the proposal to call such a conference (a General Conference of the Members of the United Nations for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter) shall be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly, and the conference shall be held if so decided by a majority of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote of any seven members of the Security Council”. There you have it. No veto. All it takes is leadership. Easy-peasy. No problem. We already have seen in the previous analysis that there are many practicable institutional reforms at hand. The World Federalists, as they have done in the past, can set up a new smart coalition of NGOs to mobilize support. Sanna Marin (Finland), Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand) and Katerina Sakellaropoulou (Greece) can lead the way. What could possibly go wrong? ❄️

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