

An Overview of *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century*

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Posted to The World Orders Forum: 16 October 2020

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From climate change to nuclear proliferation to deepening inequality, our civilization faces a set of complex threats that can only be addressed on a global scale. Unfortunately, the existing mechanisms of international cooperation lack the necessary jurisdiction, resources, and vision to tackle these crises. In [*Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century*](#), Augusto Lopez-Claros, Arthur Dahl and Maja Groff lay a draft framework for reforms of the United Nations and the international legal system that would dramatically enhance our current global governance architecture, endowing it with the capacity to find meaningful solutions to urgent contemporary problems.

The concept of supranational organizations as a means to prevent and resolve disputes between states has a distinguished lineage, dating back to Dante Alighieri's *On World Government*, Rousseau's *A Project of Perpetual Peace*, and Kant's proposal for a federation of nations evolving into "a perfect civil union of humankind." The UN itself was initially conceived as an international organization founded on federalist principles, with powers to enact laws on matters of international concern that would be binding on member states, but it emerged as a rather less ambitious entity with at least two fundamental flaws: the principle of one-country-one-vote in the General Assembly and the veto within the Security Council, both undermining the democratic legitimacy of the organization and its capacity for action. The authors address both shortcomings with proposals that can be implemented both with and without UN Charter revision.

For the UN to address contemporary global challenges effectively, these two weaknesses—among others—should again be put on the international agenda as reform priorities. In *Global Governance*, Lopez-Claros, Dahl & Groff argue for a staged transition to a system of weighted voting in the General Assembly that would better reflect the relative significance and influence of its 193 members. Under this proposal, vote share would be weighted by population, size of the economy, and a UN membership factor. The authors also recommend the creation of a UN Executive Council with 24 members to replace the Security Council, under a new paradigm in line with modern standards of governance legitimacy. Following the elimination of veto power, the Executive Council could more effectively coordinate functions in the UN system without risk of obstruction by a single power.

Other goals to be pursued under renewed global governance include meaningfully strengthening the international rule of law, solidifying international human rights obligations, addressing economic inequality, and fighting corruption. The authors delineate reforms to, among other bodies, the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, the UN Human Rights Council, and the global financial architecture that are necessary to accomplish these goals. They explore proposals to tackle corruption at the global level, including the creation of an International Anticorruption Court that would reinforce and implement a range of existing legal instruments to check the epidemic of global corruption—significantly enhancing the general quality of governance worldwide. In addition, the authors recommend the establishment of a specialized agency within the UN system with a mandate to redress global inequality through progressive taxation, employment creation, gender equality, iterations of universal basic income (UBI)-type policies, and other provisions for social security.

A hallmark of global governance in the near future will be addressing the existential challenges of climate change and population displacement. A global approach is needed for the equitable and sustainable management of natural resources, and fossil fuels must be replaced rapidly as our primary energy source. The integrity of the biosphere is in danger, requiring international efforts beyond the capacity of many countries. The existing global regulation of dangerous chemicals needs to be extended, and transboundary air pollution brought under control. Climate change will impact food and water supplies globally, shrinking carrying capacity and inducing widespread displacement. Ultimately, the anticipated global population of up to 11 billion in this century can only be supported with fundamental adjustments in lifestyles, consumption / waste patterns, social relationships, institutions and value systems towards social justice and equity. A reinforced global governance system must take an integrated approach, given the interrelation of these environmental and demographic problems, and the increasing risks of a catastrophic ecological collapse.

The authors highlight the inefficiencies and dangers of a global arms race and perpetual warfare—long flagged by the international community as a fundamental concern, but still insufficiently addressed. They assert that global governance should focus on the prevention and conscious abolition of war in order to maintain stability and to free up enormous resources for more constructive uses. The book outlines the need for and steps toward comprehensive international arms control, which would require global monitoring and verification, limiting destabilizing forces, and building trust among countries—all tasks that could be entrusted to the international system. In tandem with comprehensive international arms control, the authors recommend the

eventual establishment of an International Peace Force based on the lessons learned from decades of experience with UN peacekeeping operations.

As a nearer-term measure to enhance the democratic legitimacy of the UN, the authors discuss the establishment of a World Parliamentary Assembly (WPA) modeled after the European Parliament, as soon as possible. Representatives to the WPA would be elected by the citizens of each member state—unlike representatives to the General Assembly, who are appointed by governments. Representing the interests of the global citizenry, a World Parliamentary Assembly could bring fresh perspectives on a broad array of unresolved global problems and become an effective catalyst for advancing processes of reform and transformation at the United Nations itself. The WPA would begin as an advisory body to the General Assembly (established without the need for Charter revision); in this capacity, it could serve as a preparatory step for the eventual emergence of a General Assembly with legislative powers on key matters of international concern.

Considering the substantial responsibilities with which the UN will be tasked under this vision of renewed global governance, Lopez-Claros, Dahl and Groff advocate for an improved UN funding mechanism. The authors examine the advantages of the model currently used in the European Union, as well as of a Tobin-like tax on financial transactions, and of a system that would allocate resources to the UN as a fixed proportion of each member's GNI, without the multiple exemptions and carve outs which are in place in today's convoluted system of revenue generation.

For the near-term, the authors lay out immediate steps that the international community could take to move towards effective global governance. These steps include reopening a serious and wide-ranging debate on the need for the strengthening of the UN Charter (affirming and furthering its key values, principles and fundamental mechanisms such as collective security and the international rule of law), building a coalition of like-minded governments, and effecting priority reforms as soon as possible, including, for example, the establishment of a World Parliamentary Assembly and enhanced international action to address climate change.

Our current international architecture is no longer fit for purpose; the aims, legal principles and values enshrined in the current UN system and its Charter must be significantly strengthened. Due to too-narrow and antiquated notions of state sovereignty, the veto mechanism, inadequate resources, and lack of genuine international rule of law, the UN is currently an insufficient vehicle to address the threats facing the global community, despite its multiform achievements over the last 75 years. The UN has important institutional infrastructures that clearly make it worth reforming and substantially enhancing: universal membership, a body of texts and practices that have precipitated important changes and intensive international collaboration in selected areas, participation in most of the peace and security debates of the post-war period, and the power to enforce binding international law in certain circumstances. More importantly, the UN Charter can be amended, modernized and adapted to the needs of the present. The time for reform has come, and [*Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century*](#) seeks to shed light on practical ways forward.