

Introduction: what's wrong with the UN?

These are the best and worst of times for the UN. Best because there is a growing number of complex problems for which the world organization is still seen as the forum of first resort. And worst because in the search for solutions it is increasingly stymied by its own member-states and by the poor functionality of the system. This book is about the journey which has brought the UN and its various constituent parts through three-quarters of a century of global interdependence, and about its mixed success in adjusting to an environment of change and challenge. Change without and reform within is the recurring *leitmotif*. How the UN has changed and will change further are the keys to its continuing relevance as the foremost universal world organization. Its evolution, its adaptation and the further prospects of reform are therefore the best predictors of its continuing effectiveness.

FROM UNIVERSALISM TO UNILATERALISM AND BACK

The historical logic of the UN is a convergence of interests by states in the search for cooperative solutions to the increasingly international nature of global challenges. With few major exceptions, these challenges are human-induced and therefore amenable to human solution; most problems deemed to be a threat to international peace and security come to the UN for solution.

Multilateralism is the manifestation of convergence. It has been defined as the practice of coordinating national policies among several states in order to achieve goals of common interest (Keohane 1990) which conform to common principles of conduct (Ruggie 1993). Historically, multilateral arrangements have been designed to subsume one or more stronger powers in a cooperative relationship in which all member-states are given a voice and voting capacity which they would not otherwise have.

The United Nations is a special case of multilateralism, since it purports to be universalist, with principles and practices to which every

member-state is enjoined to subscribe: from the more compliant Norway to the less compliant North Korea, and all others in between. If universalism is to mean anything, then every member is a peer which, compliant or not, recognizes the same set of principles and values.

The UN is a manifestation of the historical convergence of national interests. At its creation it was a milestone along that path. Kant's vision of 'perpetual peace' (1957) anticipated a European pentarchy of powers committed to cooperation, widening to a global reach with the addition of the United States and Japan. The two great conflagrations of the twentieth century set back progress towards closer integration but did not permanently divert the world from its course, and gave even more urgency to the need for a bulwark against conflict. A universal organization of independent states was born, to which new states acceded as they emerged from under the tutelage of colonialism. There was no entrance exam, so the tent was a broad one with all the obvious strains of diversity and aspiration. The most important goal was to have a single shelter within which diversity could be shared and debated.

Over 75 years, the balance of powers around the UN has seen several phases. At the founding of the UN, the US, the UK and other European countries exerted influence as the major economies, countermanded by the USSR, which was free in the use of its veto, limiting the scope of the UN's peace operations throughout the Cold War. In the meantime, from the 1960s, the developing countries began to outnumber the developed in the GA giving more impetus to the UN's development work. Then, with the Cold War over, there was a phase of unipolarity during which the US was the single dominant power inside the UN. What followed was a period of unprecedented expansion of the multilateral liberal order. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) came into force in 1994, and the Kyoto Protocol agreed in 1997. The same decade saw the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court (1998) and the Ottawa Treaty on landmines (1997). Outside the UN, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) gained new members from Eastern Europe; the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 created the European Union (EU), soon to be expanded; and the more inclusive World Trade Organization (WTO) arose in 1995 from the foundations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The economic ascendance of some of the former developing countries over the last two decades has now changed the configuration of influences. Among the new powers, China's weight is preponderant, not just because of its sheer economic and demographic size, but also because of its desire to engage more fully with the UN. China's influence is all the greater as a result of the weakening engagement of the US, whose current leadership

shows less interest in the promotion of human rights, has announced its withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, and reduced its contributions to the UN's humanitarian and peacekeeping programmes. With the recent resurgence of nationalism in the leaderships of some of other major powers, China's role as the most committed major multilateral country appears all the stronger and facilitates its growing influence.

China arrived on the world stage via a spectacularly successful development path which, although unique in many respects, provides a model of a specifically non-liberal agenda: a one-party polity; a strong state reaching into almost every aspect of the lives of its citizens; a controlled media; and the denial of many civic rights, even though its constitution upholds freedom of expression and religion. Internationally, China supports inviolable national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In 2017, China's Foreign Minister, Wang Li, was reported in the Chinese media as saying that "over the past five years, China has unprecedentedly increased its right to set the international agenda and remarkably enlarged its right to make international rules". This is a bold statement from a new superpower. In fact China, while not a liberal polity, has been one of the world's prime beneficiaries of the international world order, albeit through its protectionist policies. In Davos in January 2017, President Xi somewhat disingenuously made a robust play for free trade and globalization.

China is asserting its position in the UN in various ways, both internal and external to the organization. Internally, it has secured some key positions at the head of several UN organizations – the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the International Telecommunication Union – deriving support from the many member-states which benefit from Chinese development assistance. China is also downplaying, and sometimes actively opposing, the UN's human rights functions. The fact that DESA, the secretariat department which serviced the discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is headed by a Beijing appointee helps account for the absence of human rights considerations in this otherwise detailed set of development goals. The current reform programme of the Secretary-General (SG) includes peace operations, development and management, but is also singularly silent on the human rights activities of the UN. The further reform of the Human Rights Council, which includes China but not now the US, is unlikely to proceed.

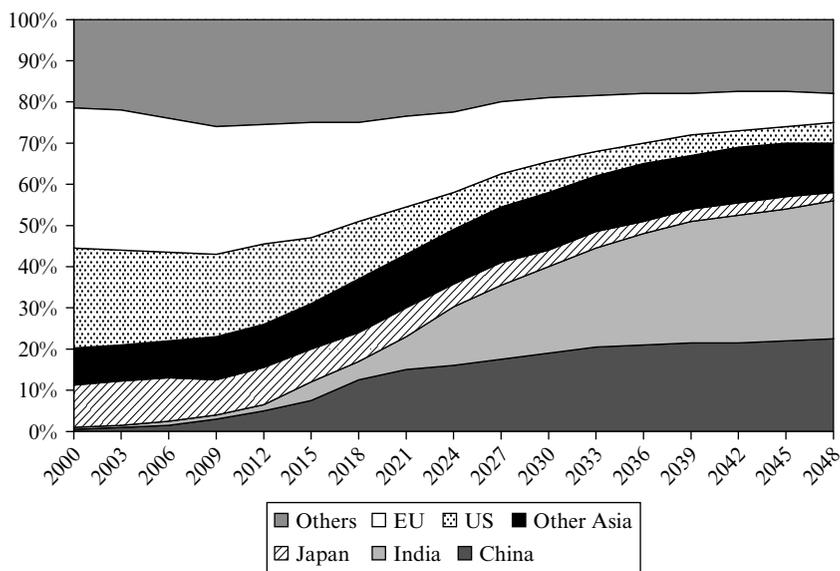
Externally, however, China pursues its commercial and diplomatic agendas in support of some key UN functions. Through an organization like UNIDO, with which it has created several global and regional centres of excellence, China is able to showcase its technologies to other developing

countries (Browne 2012), promoting the UN goal of South–South cooperation. China has also become a prominent supporter of UN peacekeeping, raising its contribution to more than 10 per cent of the annual budget and providing forces to several of the UN’s African missions (just as the US is deciding to draw back). China’s presence on the ground under its own blue helmets allows it to mobilize its personnel and equipment, strengthen its military capacity and burnish its image as a responsible global advocate for peace. Not coincidentally, China is now the largest supplier of small arms to Africa.¹ Also, its concerns about non-interference have not prevented China from endorsing the majority of sanctions regimes that have come before the SC. In the area of climate change, China has been an influence for good, intent on moving into the space vacated by a sceptical US leadership. Thus while China has adopted a different path in its own domestic development, eschewing a liberal agenda, it has aligned its interests with key functions of the UN; ‘setting’ the UN agenda can also mean reinforcing it. China’s influence is all the stronger because of its wide following in the global South, as a major bilateral donor as well as an example of state-driven development. On many issues, it continues to include itself among the G77 countries, playing a leadership role in UN negotiations.

With the retreat of the US from multilateralism (even if assumed to be only temporary), some have called for traditional US allies to come together to act as a liberal counterweight (Daalder and Lindsay 2018). But to characterize the new balance of interests as bipolar would be an oversimplification. The US–China relationship is not as clear-cut as between the US and USSR during the long Cold War. While the US and China are the most influential members, Russia under its current leadership has less use for the UN, but as a P5 member has the capacity to assert its will in the realms of peacemaking and human rights. Rapid economic growth – often achieved under state capitalism rather than neo-liberalism – has propelled the emergence of new global powers onto the world stage. India’s share of global GDP is higher than either France or the UK. It has a long-standing programme of development cooperation and, like China and Brazil, is a champion of South–South cooperation. With India, Brazil is among the top eight countries by economic size, and former developing countries like South Korea, Indonesia and Mexico are now in the trillion dollar league.² An overview of the changing global economic balance, using middle-class consumption as a proxy, is shown

¹ “China is now the biggest arms seller to sub-Saharan Africa and has defence technology ties with 45 countries” (Economist 2019).

² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD> (accessed January 2019).



Source: Thakur (2013).

Figure I.1 Shares of global middle-class consumption, 2000–2048

in Figure I.1, in which the future dominance of China, India and other Asian countries can be clearly seen.

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa constitute the BRICS grouping which has established its own institutions of global governance, including most notably the New Development Bank. The G20 grouping – which includes all the BRICS countries – has been described as “more in tune with contemporary development paradigms than the United Nations” (Thakur 2013). China itself has put its own realist influence at the centre of new geographic configurations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Forum of China-African Cooperation and others.

GRIDLOCK?

Today’s ‘universalist’ UN is thus under strain from multipolar pressures and competition from other powerful forums of global governance. Multipolarity and fragmentation are two of the four phenomena which have been identified as a cause of today’s ‘gridlock’ in global governance.

The others are the growing complexity of problems and institutional inertia (Hale et al. 2013). Applying these four factors to the UN can help explain its current challenges, while also suggesting why change is needed to help restore its effectiveness.

Start with multipolarity. Within the SC, three of the veto-wielding members have strikingly divergent views, alarmingly backed by a renewed spirit of nationalist belligerence and under highly personalized forms of rule. The readiness of each to wield the veto in support of their own world views has frustrated convergence in matters of peacekeeping and human rights. Optimists wedded to a liberal world order will claim that, while the Trump–Putin–Xi nexus is holding the UN back, the world just needs to wait for a more accommodating set of leaders (more akin to the 1980s era of Bush (senior)–Gorbachev–Deng or the 1990s of Clinton–Yeltsin–Jiang) to become more effective again. However, there are other rising powers that need to be factored in, including Brazil, which elected a nationalist-minded president in 2018, and India, which has recently moved towards more state control under its current prime minister. The UN has never been so beholden to the vicissitudes of domestic politics.

Across the range of UN functions, multipolarity will slow or halt the historical trend towards a universal liberal governance regime and make consensus more difficult to achieve in arriving at future treaties and conventions. The UN Charter, however, as the foundation of UN values and principles, will not be rewritten and the substantial body of international law developed by the UN will not be unwound. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) could be said to serve as an acid test of the durability of UN law. It has been questioned before. When ‘Asian values’ were claimed by some countries including China to supersede or replace the terms of the UDHR, the Vienna conference of 1993 was able to reaffirm its principles by agreeing to “the promotion and protection by all states of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” (United Nations 1993, para. 5). It will be in the interpretation of the UN’s treaties and conventions that diversions will occur. Sovereignty considerations will hinder the work of the International Criminal Court and inhibit UN action under the Responsibility to Protect.³ ‘Informalization’ could erode levels of obligation and send dissenting powers to other forums (Stephen 2017). While the ‘First UN’ of governments continues to splinter, the ‘Second UN’ of organizations, with the active support of non-state ‘Third UN’ civil society organizations (Weiss et al. 2009), will be required to maintain its independent role in helping to ensure compliance with the UN’s own legal

³ Brazil has proposed Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) as an alternative whereby military action would be used as a last resort under close monitoring and review.

obligations. Only by safeguarding two of the qualities of the organization which distinguish it from every other – the independence of the secretariat and the good offices role of the Secretary-General – will the UN's survival be ensured.

Fragmentation of the global governance system has also led to more seizure. In 1981, there were 1000 international organizations; today there are some 8000 (Union of International Organizations 2017). This organizational proliferation constitutes a highly complex web in which mandates and norms overlap, encouraging 'forum shopping' and weakening any positive impact that each cooperative framework may have. The UN is itself made up of many independently managed organizations, and its multifarious 'system' is intermingled with thousands of others. To combat the disadvantages of fragmentation within and without, the UN needs much greater internal consolidation, as well as a rededication to the unique roles for which it was created.

A third cause of gridlock is the sheer complexity of global problems. With growing interdependence, these 'problems without passports', as Kofi Annan called them, are greater in amplitude and reach, and therefore only soluble through international cooperation. More and more countries are caught up in climate change, disease pandemics, migration, criminal networks, cyber warfare, arms proliferation, terrorism, financial meltdown and other problems which have to be addressed through multilateral channels. Most such problems come to the UN, but they cannot be resolved only through actions of its member-states, since they involve other domestic constituencies. Other voices therefore need to be heard in UN forums if sustainable solutions are to be found. If a real 'parliament of man' (Kennedy 2006) cannot be created, the UN must learn to engage constructively with non-state partners, while not compromising its principles.

Fourth, institutional inertia applied to the UN means that while the global organization has adapted itself in many areas it must continue to embrace change even where there is the greatest intransigence. A prime example is the composition of the UN SC dominated by the five victorious powers of 1945. In one important sense the SC is actually more representative now than in the 1940s, since the Republic of China yielded to a regime which has since brought the country to superpower status, while France now represents the world's largest trading bloc and the UK is one of the 53 Commonwealth countries. However, the failure to enlarge the permanent membership (for example to include Japan, India, Nigeria, South Africa and Brazil) has led to a steady loss of faith in the UN by many important powers. Attempts to change the composition have failed over many years and appear to be futile. The best hope for reform lies in modulating procedures in ways which can sidestep the use of the veto. In

its other functions, the UN has evolved and changed through a process of accretion with no strategic oversight, leading to ever greater challenges of coordination. A continuing institutional transformation is needed if the UN is to win back the waning support of some of its member-states and respond to the needs of “we, the peoples” in whose name the organization was founded.

VIEWS OF THE GLOBAL PUBLIC

In this book we assess the prospects for reform from the viewpoint of the three UNs described above. The First UN of member-state governments is dominated by three veto-wielding powers whose leaders currently have limited interest in reforming the UN. Only changes in leadership, perhaps beginning in 2021, would alter their positions. The Second UN – its organizations and their staff – can effect change from within, with the encouragement of the Third UN, civil society at large. But this UN needs to be more aware of its own shortcomings. The patronizing too-friendly-to-fail approach of member-states and their patronized agents, the secretariats, cocoons the UN from external criticism. But there are naysayers without, and their views need to be heard in order to temper the prevailing sense of complacency. The UN’s status as a prime ‘global governor’ is threatened by negative external perceptions of its utility. There is a lot of scepticism about the relevance and effectiveness of the UN, by representatives of all three UNs when canvassed individually. To restore faith in its capacity to meet and resolve global problems, and adapt accordingly, the Second UN needs to be made more aware of its fundamental weaknesses.

As in all international organizations, each major entity of the UN periodically indulges in its own self-examination. Whenever a new head takes over, there is an attempt at rebranding or revisiting an organization’s mandate. At the more micro level, each organization has its own evaluation mechanisms, but these are rarely independent of their respective secretariats. Many of the findings of UN evaluations are based on unsophisticated analysis and reported by insiders in governments and counterpart organizations, which can be expected to harbour subjective opinions. Objectivity is also inhibited by the sensitivities of UN organizations to the opinions of donors, given that parts of the UN are so heavily dependent on voluntary funding.⁴ Considering themselves accountable upwards to their moneyed

⁴ When UNDP’s evaluation office in 2013 was mildly critical of the organization’s contribution to poverty reduction, the negative reactions of donors contributed to reductions in pledges.

principals, the UN organizations are insufficiently attuned to the opinions of their intended beneficiaries – “we, the peoples”.

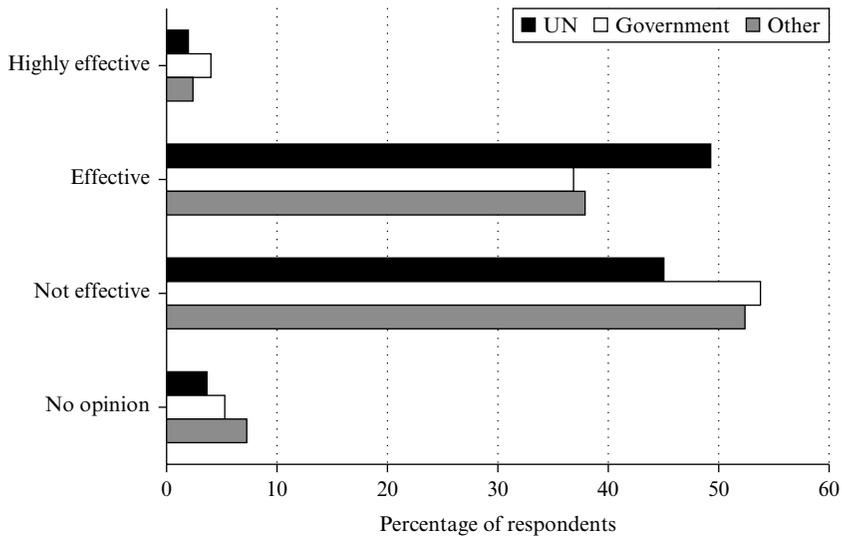
Besides these internal evaluations, which almost invariably turn out to be positive, there have been few attempts at cross-organizational assessments of UN effectiveness. For more than ten years, the GA has repeatedly called for ‘system-wide evaluations’, and in 2014 the UN Independent System-Wide Evaluation Mechanism (UNISWEM) was established. It recognized that “evaluations, in the context of individual UN entities, were, ad hoc, dispersed, had limited coverage, and, were not coherent on a system-wide basis”.⁵ The new entity will undoubtedly help in standardizing evaluation practices across organizations and encourage knowledge sharing. But while it aims to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) as a whole to respond to “global, regional and country level needs and priorities” it will also serve to confirm the dispiriting number of separate UN organizations working in parallel within each domain, while not advocating how the system might be streamlined and rationalized. It has been left to successive reform initiatives aimed at the UNDS to discover that the UN is disjointed and incoherent, and (in the case of the 1995 Report of the Commission on Global Governance) that there is considerable organizational redundancy.

In order to hold a mirror up to the UN as a performer and tap into more objective perceptions of the UN system’s effectiveness among the global public, the FUNDS Project conducted a series of biennial surveys of UN-watchers between 2012 and 2016, amassing more than 9000 responses from people in over 150 countries representing the three UNs. Because respondents were anonymous, they could be expected to express their views freely, without regard to their relationship to the UN, as government representatives, staff or outsiders.

The results were not very reassuring. From the 2016 survey, the UN was found to be more ineffective than effective overall by governments and civil society. Only those in the UN itself were more positive than negative (Figure I.2). This is the most telling finding of all, and the clearest signal that the UN must change if it is to win back the confidence of the global public.

When asked to rank the major functions of the UN, the different cohorts showed more variation. Those in government ranked peacekeeping highest, followed by sustainable development and human rights. Civil society also put peacekeeping at the top, but had human rights ahead of

⁵ <http://www.uniswem.org/about1.html> (accessed on 1 January 2019).



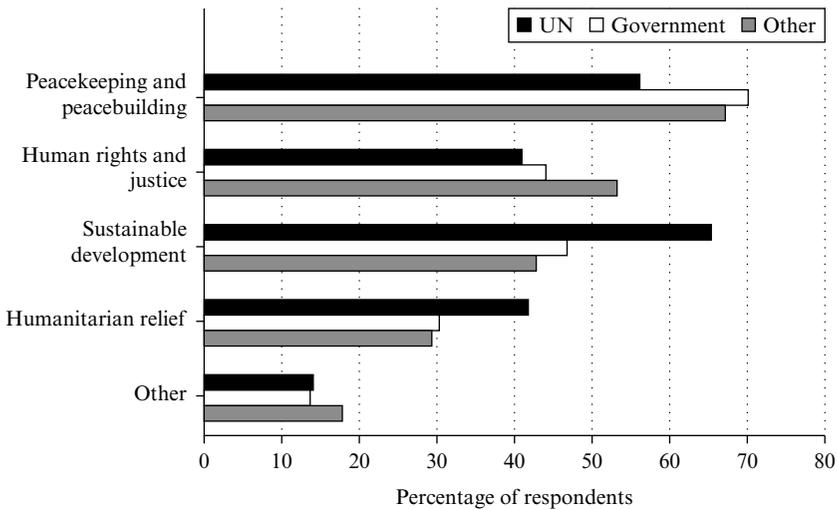
Source: FUNDS Project (FutureUN.org).

Figure I.2 How effective is the UN overall?

sustainable development. UN insiders ranked sustainable development above peacekeeping, followed by human rights and humanitarian relief (Figure I.3).

There were similarly wide variations in responses to the most urgent priorities for the incoming Secretary-General in 2017. Governments and civil society agreed that the highest priority by far was to address conflict and human displacement, and emphasized the need for implementing changes to peace operations and peacebuilding. Two-thirds of UN insiders – many of whom would have been working in the development pillar – showed considerable self-awareness in putting the highest priority by far on reviewing the effectiveness of the UNDS (Figure I.4).

After five years (at the end of the current SG's first term), most respondents wanted to see closer integration of the UN's four pillars. The UN respondents placed a high priority on monitoring and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and less on monitoring the Paris Climate Change agreement (both finalized in 2015). One-third also gave priority to "fewer entities in the UN development system", again demonstrating a measure of self-criticism. Civil society largely echoed the priorities of governments, but not surprisingly put more emphasis on their participation in the UN's work (Figure I.5).

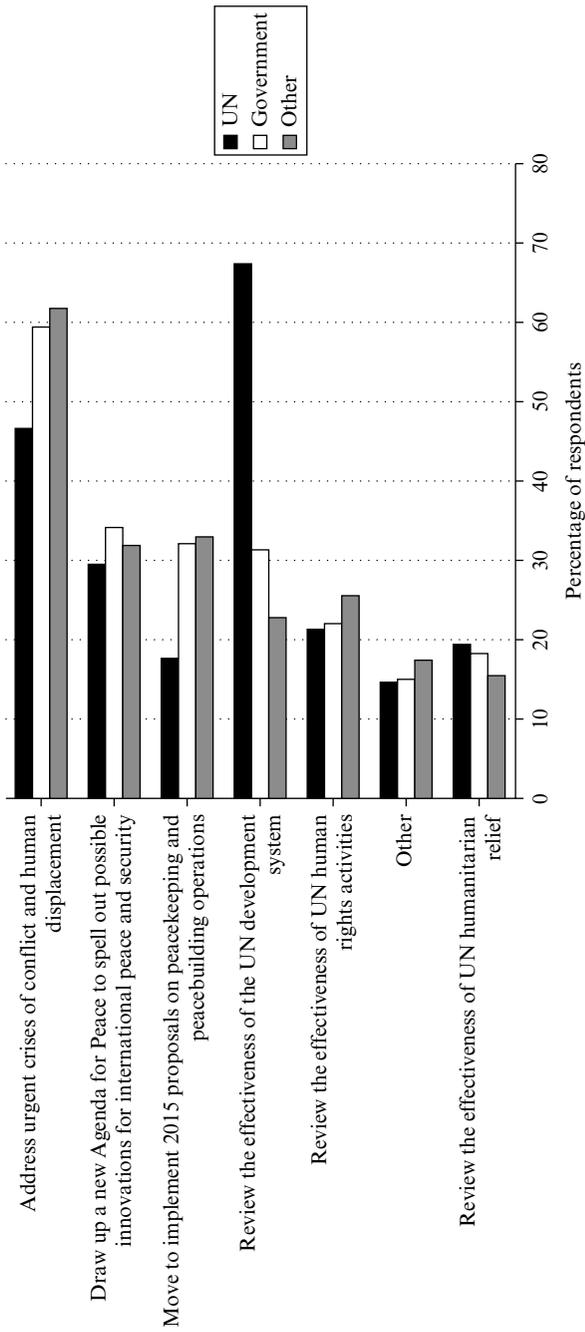


Source: FUNDS Project (FutureUN.org).

Figure I.3 What are the most important functions of the UN?

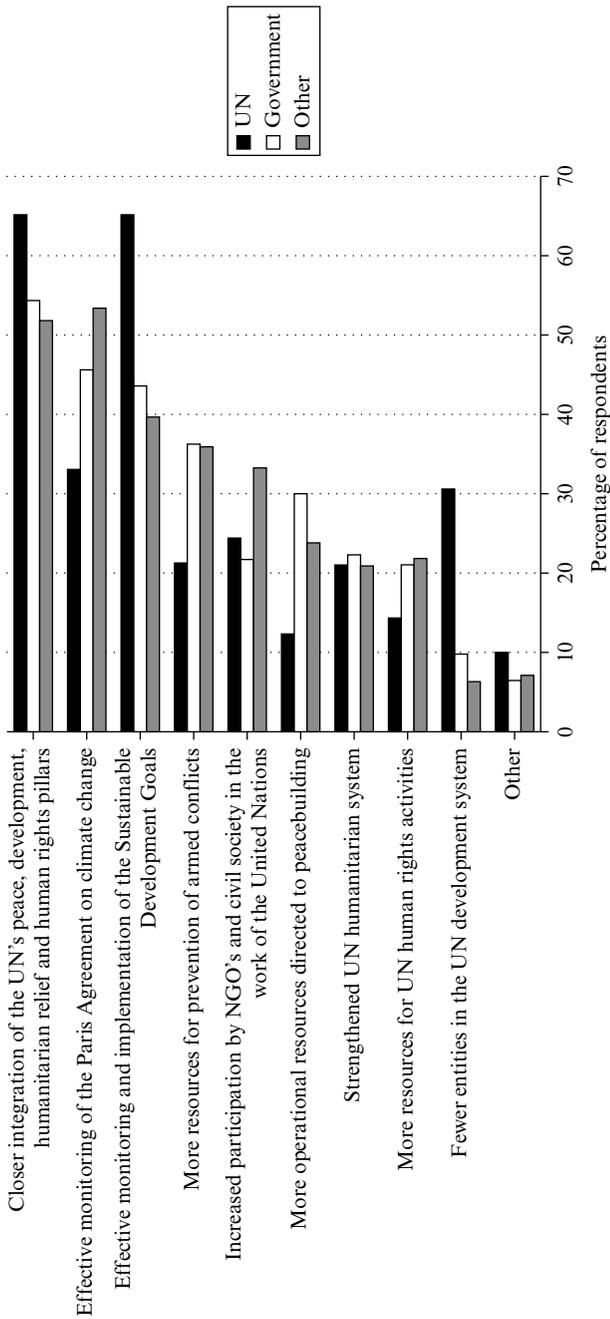
Each survey also contained open-ended questions seeking individual opinions on the UN. Many of the comments reflected the findings of the survey, urging the UN to be less bureaucratic, more nimble, more cohesive and more open to partnerships. Other concerns that were frequently raised included what many saw as the untoward influence of the major donors, and particularly the ‘permanent five’ in the SC. There was a clear yearning for an independent UN founded upon universal values.

For change to take hold, the UN needs to know its principal failings, more actively seeking the opinions of those it aims to serve: not just the member-states with their own vested interests but those they represent, for whom the values and principles of the UN are the most meaningful. In the 2016 FUNDS survey, between 80 and 90 per cent of respondents in each category found engagement of the UN with ordinary citizens to be “essential” or “very important”. Ultimately, it is the verdict of the global public which will determine the organization’s continuing utility. The UN should listen and respond.



Source: FUNDS Project (FutureUN.org).

Figure I.4 What are the most urgent substantive priorities?



Source: FUNDS Project (FutureUN.org).

Figure 1.5 Desired results after five years (2021)

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book is a condensed history of change in the UN: a system comprising member-states as principals (the First UN) and the organizations (agencies or Second UN) which have continuously evolved, assuming functions which had never been anticipated by the signatories of the Charter in San Francisco. The system was conceived for the benefit of “We the peoples”, as the Charter reminds us. They are the Third UN.

Structurally, the book may be seen as a four by three matrix. The UN’s main functions have developed around four pillars of activity, and these are each examined in separate chapters reflecting the UN’s current architecture, even though the precise distinctions between these functions are often ambiguous. Across the analysis, the book also refers to the three UNs mentioned above. In different ways, and with different motivations, each UN has had, and can have, influence on the way the system adapts and reforms.

The four pillars comprise peace and security, human rights and justice, humanitarian response and development. The manner in which the UN administered its *peace operations* had to be invented. The laws and institutions around the promotion of *human rights* were not fully anticipated. The scale of natural and, more latterly, man-made *humanitarian* disasters was never foreseen and, in responding, the world body has been running to catch up over its entire lifetime. The controversial notion of multilateral aid for *development* – and even the term itself – was first pioneered within the UN and has led to a proliferation of UN development organizations which are today more numerous and more atomized than at any time in the UN’s history.

The first Secretary-General described his job as “the most impossible on this earth” (Tharoor 2007). Certainly, as the ‘chief administrative officer’ there was nothing in the Charter about fashioning an architectural blueprint to guide the construction of the UN’s four pillars, still less to determine the shape of the walls between them. Each pillar has its own distinct hierarchy, its own set of staff skills, its own funding sources and sponsors; and each responds to its own agendas and directives. The largest pillar – development – is itself highly fragmented, and becoming more so in spite of numerous coordination mechanisms which add high transaction costs to the UN’s operations. Only very recently have the multiple development entities signed up to a common set of goals, albeit common to only one pillar of the UN edifice.

The world’s problems that come to the UN for solution are not so compartmentalized. Peace and development are inexorably connected. There is no meaningful development paradigm – including the latest version of

‘sustainable development’, which includes human rights or humanitarian needs, and so on. Thus, descriptions of the UN ‘system’ – which is not really a system at all – have difficulty deciding how many pillars there really are, sometimes combining development with humanitarian action, sometimes development or peacekeeping with human rights. Analysis of one inevitably spills over into another.

Yet in practice, the UN continues to work in compartments which do not adequately connect. Even when all its emergency services are clustered in a crisis country, lines of communication travel upwards to all the respective headquarters. In almost all scenarios of UN operations, different entities compete for prominence and resources. Silo-ization is one of the most important criticisms aimed at the UN, and efforts to connect its many different entities have been, and remain, a principal objective of reform.

If the global community were to build from ground zero today, with the world as it is, the UN edifice would look very different, its pillars subsumed within a single larger structure. Since we cannot start over with UN construction, this book makes no advance apology for describing reform within each of the four pillars. However, it draws attention to the ambiguities of the separation, and pleads throughout for a more joined-up organization. The book describes the workings of each pillar in some detail, tracing their evolution over the life of the UN. The purpose is partly didactic. But by relating the experience, it becomes apparent why the UN has had to change, and why it still needs to change, while assessing the realistic chances of change occurring.

The first chapter describes the origins of what has become a complex edifice, tracing some of its antecedents to the League of Nations and even before. The chapter is a reminder of the dominant influence of the US in the UN’s creation and subsequent expansion: mostly positive but also obstructive at times. In its founding, however, there were some built-in constraints which have never been overcome and which have frustrated many subsequent reform efforts. This chapter traces the origin of the many separately governed organizations and entities that make up what is now a disparate and dispersed ‘system’, divided somewhat artificially into the four pillars that correspond to the major functions of the UN: the subjects of the next four chapters. The UN’s dispersion today results in large part from the constraints built into the original design of the organization, a concern revisited throughout the book.

Chapter 2 outlines in detail the peacekeeping story of the UN, from the earliest examples of overseeing ceasefire agreements to the more elaborate missions of peace enforcement, the disastrous interventions in the early 1990s and the highly complex involvements of the UN in today’s conflicts. It is a story of invention and change as the UN adjusted to the Cold War

and its aftermath, from inter-state to intra-state conflict and confrontations with global terrorism. Lessons were sometimes learnt too late to avoid failure, but practice has continued to evolve in which power-broking, processes and personalities have all played a part. Maintaining security also encompasses the before and after: prevention and reconstruction, in both of which UN experience has been mixed under the label of peacebuilding. The chapter also examines the record on disarmament, on counter-terrorism and the use of sanctions, before concluding with a review of the latest proposals on needed reforms.

Chapter 3 reviews the evolution of what for many represents the most important function, and the central value system, of the UN: the promotion of human rights, starting with the Universal Declaration. It describes the main institutions which have been created to encourage compliance and enforce justice against the backdrop of terrible state-driven human abuse in China, Indonesia, Cambodia, Rwanda and elsewhere, and the denial of freedoms in many other countries. The UN, however, with limited resources, continued to develop treaties, build institutions and hold conferences to keep the focus on human rights abuse. With the appointment of the first High Commissioner and a human rights office in 1993, activities moved into a higher gear. The Commission on Human Rights became a Council in 2005, special rapporteurs were appointed and the Universal Periodic Review became one of the most effective compliance review mechanisms. Another landmark was reached in 2004 when the International Criminal Court was established in spite of opposition from major powers. These institutions are not being used to full effect. Since 2016, the UN has given more prominence to refugee and migrant rights with the agreement of two new Compacts. Human rights activities are kept artificially separated from the UN's other pillars, and should become a more intimate component of all UN activities.

Humanitarian aid is the subject of Chapter 4. Crises have grown in amplitude, becoming more frequently man-made. With the onset of climate change even the distinction of natural and man-made disasters has become blurred. With UN help, some countries have developed more resilience and better response capacity; but when crises are provoked by conflict, the UN's main humanitarian organizations – the World Food Programme, the High Commission for Refugees, the Relief Works Agency and the Children's Fund (UNICEF) – are sometimes overwhelmed by the scale of suffering, and held back from responding. Institutionally, the UN has been evolving almost continually as it attempts to build effective coordination within itself and between its organizations and a growing multitude of almost 4500 private and public relief agencies. But change is never enough. The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 examined the

funding and the localization of humanitarian response as part of the UN's new *Agenda for Humanity* and helped reaffirm the principles of sound humanitarian action. But there are obvious disconnects in the UN's efforts. Three times as much is spent on humanitarian aid as on peacekeeping. And while the development agenda speaks of "leaving no one behind", it makes no provision for humanitarian action.

The UN's largest and most dispersed pillar is the UN development 'system' of more than 35 separate organizations, the subject of Chapter 5. Early on, the UN made a substantial original contribution to thinking on development; and its ideational role, involving research, information and advocacy, has played a major part in the global agenda on social development and the environment. Member-states, however, steered the debates on trade and economics away from the UN. In 1990, a part of the UN elaborated a paradigm of human development, fully attuned to the principles of the Charter; but it never became the appropriate integrating framework for the organization as a whole, encompassing human security, human rights and human needs. Instead, the UN has pursued a development agenda based on top-down sectoral approaches which maintained the separateness of the development pillar, to the exclusion of essential political and human rights dimensions. Its agenda has been developed through numerous international conferences and, since 2000, through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals, the latter covering the period 2015–30. Operationally, the UN development system has had a mixed record, particularly as it finds itself in competition with many other sources of development assistance, and competes fiercely within itself as a result of growing silo-ization, which the current funding pattern of earmarked resources encourages. Successive reforms have attempted to create more coherence, but with limited success due to the prevalence of patronage in the system. The development system needs to recognize that its real value-added lies in its ideational and normative functions, and that it should gear its operations to helping member-states become more compliant.

Chapter 6 takes stock of the constraints to reform of the UN, some of which were built in from the inception. Considering the constraints and taking account of the current shortcomings, the chapter describes four areas in which the UN can revive its image and effectiveness: better internal management, particularly of its human resources; reform of its funding practices; a more coherent and consolidated approach to partnerships; and a rededication to those functions in which the UN has a clear comparative advantage. Beneficial change will require strong internal leadership and more harmony of functions and values across the whole system.

REFERENCES

- Browne, Stephen (2012), *The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Daalder, Ivo. H. and James M. Lindsay (2018), 'The committee to save the world order', *Foreign Affairs*, 7/6, 72–83.
- Economist (2019), 'The new scramble for Africa', London, 9 March.
- Hale, Thomas, David Held and Kevin Young (2013), *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation is Failing When We Need it Most*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kant, Immanuel (1957), *Perpetual Peace* (1795), ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Kennedy, Paul (2006), *The Parliament of Man*. London: Penguin.
- Keohane, Robert O. (1990). 'Multilateralism: an agenda for research', *International Journal*, 45/4, 731–64.
- Ruggie, John G., ed. (1993), *Multilateralism Matters: the Theory and Practice of an Institutional Form*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Stephen, Matthew D. (2017), 'Emerging powers and emerging trends in global governance', *Global Governance*, 23/3, 483–502.
- Thakur, Ramesh (2013), 'The G20 versus the UN: rival development forums?' FUNDS Briefing no. 3, April, <https://www.futureun.org/media/archive1/briefings/Briefing-3-Ramesh-Thakur-G20.pdf>.
- Tharoor, Shashi (2007), 'The most impossible job description', in Simon Chesterton (ed.), *Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Union of International Associations (2017), *Yearbook of International Organizations, 2017/8*, Leiden: Brill.
- United Nations (1993), *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. New York: UN. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx>.
- Weiss, Thomas G., Tatiana Carayannis and Richard Jolly (2009), 'The Third UN', *Global Governance*, 14/1, 123–42.