

71/2025

12/11/2025

Francisco Márquez y de la Rubia

**The UN in the face of the eclipse of multilateralism: between irrelevance and reinvention****The UN in the face of the eclipse of multilateralism: between irrelevance and reinvention****Abstract**

Eighty years after its creation, the United Nations faces an unprecedented structural crisis. The weakening of multilateralism, the paralysis of the Security Council and the erosion of U.S. leadership—exacerbated by the resurgence of Trumpism—threaten the liberal international order. This essay interprets the current state of the UN, assessing the causes, consequences, and plausible scenarios for the coming decade. It concludes that the survival of the multilateral system will depend on its ability to adapt to a multipolar order and on the political will of major powers to preserve the concept of collective security.

**Keywords:**

United Nations, Multilateralism, International order, Trumpism, Global governance

**How to cite this document:**

MARQUEZ Y DE LA RUBIA, Francisco. *The UN in the face of the eclipse of multilateralism: between irrelevance and reinvention*. IEEE Analysis Document 71/2025. [IEEE web link](#) and/or [bie link](#)<sup>3</sup> (accessed day/month/year)  
@Fmarquezdlr

**\*NOTE:** The ideas contained in the *Analysis Papers* are the responsibility of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IEEE or the Ministry of Defence.

## 1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) is entering its eighth decade of existence in a context of systemic exhaustion. The ideal of multilateral cooperation, which has been at the core of its legitimacy since 1945, is now being challenged by the resurgence of nationalist leaderships and the erosion of liberal consensus. In 2019, *The Economist* published a prescient analysis—*The UN's grim future*<sup>1</sup>—which proposed three possible trajectories: the marginalization of the UN under Donald Trump's unilateralism, its inertial survival, or an unlikely renewal<sup>2</sup>. Six years later, the combination of these three trends shapes the present. The abandonment of multilateralism, the revaluation of absolute sovereignty, and the US withdrawal have destabilized the institutional framework that underpinned global governance. The UN is no longer the forum where conflicts are arbitrated, but rather the mirror that reflects the fractures of world power.

## 2. Multilateralism in crisis: causes and symptoms

During the Cold War, the UN was a space of balance: rather than resolving conflicts, it managed them within the limits set by nuclear deterrence and the logic of blocs. The paralysis of the Security Council was functional, not pathological; it prevented direct confrontation between the superpowers. After the Soviet collapse, multilateralism experienced an unprecedented expansion. The 1990s, marked by US hegemony and liberal confidence, allowed for talk of a "unipolar moment" where international institutions were perceived as benign extensions of a rules-based order. The approval of UN-mandated peacekeeping interventions (Kuwait, Somalia, Bosnia, East Timor) symbolized this convergence.

However, the optimism was short-lived. The 9/11 attacks and the Iraq War in 2003 revealed the fragility of the multilateral consensus: the Security Council was divided, the legitimacy of the use of force was reinterpreted unilaterally, and the principle of "collective security" began to erode. From then on, multilateralism entered a prolonged crisis of

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, "The UN's grim future", September 2019

<sup>2</sup> *The article "The UN's Grim Future", published by The Economist in September 2019, proposed three scenarios for the institutional evolution of the United Nations: marginalisation under US unilateralism, inertial continuity without profound reforms, and an unlikely structural renewal. This interpretation takes up that typology as an analytical framework, adapting it to the geopolitical situation in 2025 and the evolution of multilateralism after the return of Trumpism. It is not a verbatim quote, but rather a reworking of the argument inspired by that approach.*

legitimacy, effectiveness, and representation, which I believe can be explained through three main vectors.

2.1. Institutional paralysis and decline of political authority. The paralysis of the Security Council is the most visible symptom. Vetoes by the United States, Russia and China have blocked essential resolutions on Syria (2011-2022), Ukraine (since 2014) and Gaza (2023-2025)<sup>3</sup>. This dynamic has emptied the notion of "responsibility to protect" of its meaning and reinforced the perception that the UN only acts where the vital interests of the major powers are not at stake<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the Council reflects an anachronistic geopolitical imbalance. None of the emerging powers—India, Brazil, South Africa or Nigeria—holds a permanent seat, despite representing a large part of the world's population. Successive proposals for reform have foundered due to a lack of consensus, perpetuating an architecture frozen in 1945.

Table 1 : Security Council vetoes Gaza, Syria, Ukraine

Conflict	Date	Draft	Proponents	Vetoed by	Description
Gaza	18 Octob er 2023	S/2023/7 73	Brazil	United States	Called for humanitarian pauses and access for aid; condemned attacks on civilians.
Gaza	25 Octob er 2023	S/2023/7 92	US	Russia and China	Alternative US draft resolution on the situation in Gaza.
Gaza	8 Dece mber 2023	S/2023/9 70	UAE	United States	Immediate humanitarian ceasefire and unhindered access.
Gaza	20 Febru ary 2024	S/2024/1 73	Algeria	United States	Immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/Research/FlagPost/2025/September/UN\\_voting\\_patterns\\_reflect\\_the\\_changing\\_geopolitical\\_landscape?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/Research/FlagPost/2025/September/UN_voting_patterns_reflect_the_changing_geopolitical_landscape?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Gaza	22 March 2024	S/2024/239	Russia and China (draft)	Russia and China (against rival text)	Rival draft to that of the US; veto of rival text in session.
Gaza	2024-11-20	S/2024/835	(various)	United States	Called for a ceasefire in Gaza.
Gaza	4 June 2025	S/2025/353	(various)	United States	Immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza.
Gaza	18 September 2025	S/2025/583	(various)	United States	Called for a ceasefire and full access for aid; release of hostages.
Syria	4 October 2011	S/2011/612	France, Germany, Portugal, United Kingdom	Russia and China	Condemned the Syrian regime's repression and opened the door to sanctions under Article 41.
Syria	22 May 2014	S/2014/348	France (and co-sponsors)	Russia and China	Referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
Syria	16 November 2017	S/2017/962	France, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.	Russia	Extension of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) on chemical weapons.
Syria	17 November 2017	S/2017/970	Japan	Russia	Another proposal for a technical extension of the JIM on chemical weapons.
Syria	10 April 2018	S/2018/321	Broad group led by the US and allies	Russia	Independent mechanism to investigate use of chemical weapons after Douma.
Syria	19 September 2019	S/2019/756	Belgium, Germany and Kuwait	Russia and China	Ceasefire in Idlib and protection of civilians.
Syria	20 December 2019	S/2019/961	Belgium, Germany and Kuwait	Russia and China	Renewal of the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism.
Syria	7 July 2020	S/2020/654	Belgium and Germany	Russia and China	Extension of cross-border humanitarian access (two steps).

Syria	10 July 2020	S/2020/67	Belgium and Germany	Russia and China	New version for extension of cross-border aid.
Syria	8 July 2022	S/2022/538	Ireland and Norway	Russia	12-month extension of the cross-border assistance mechanism.
Ukraine	15 March 2014	S/2014/189	United States (42 co-sponsors)	Russia	Declared the Crimean referendum invalid and called for abstention from recognising it.
Ukraine	25 February 2022	S/2022/155	United States and Albania	Russia	Condemned the Russian invasion and demanded the withdrawal of forces.
Ukraine	30 September 2022	S/2022/720	United States and Albania	Russia	Condemned the "referendums" and the annexation of Ukrainian territories.

2.2. Financial erosion and dependence on selective donors. Financial deterioration is another critical factor. The United States, historically the main contributor, has reduced its effective contribution since 2017, generating structural deficits that force short-term programs to be prioritized. At the same time, growing dependence on voluntary contributions—often earmarked or politically motivated—weakens the autonomy of the agencies. Much of the United Nations' operating budget comes from conditional contributions. China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have increased their funding in an effort to project influence, leading to a silent shift in internal balances and greater weight for non-Western donors. A report by the UN system<sup>5</sup> shows that UN funding is increasingly dominated by earmarked contributions (i.e., contributions that are conditional or directed to specific programs) rather than core contributions. In 2022, earmarked contributions accounted for approximately 67% of the UN system's total income; core contributions had fallen to 29% of the total<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://financingun.report/un-financing/un-funding/total-revenue-un-system?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://financingun.report/un-financing/un-funding/total-revenue-un-system?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>6</sup> Global Policy Forum (2023). *UN Funding and Financial Crisis Briefing Paper*.

Entity	Assessed 2023	Voluntary core 2023	Earmarked 2023	Revenue from other activities 2023	Total revenue 2023	2010-2023
UN Secretariat	3,278	228	2,983	1,057	7,546	3.7B — 7.5B
UN-DPO	6,494		336	159	6,990	8.0B — 7.0B
CTBTO	132		8	10	151	128.0M — 150.5M
FAO	530	44	1,814	11	2,399	1.4B — 2.4B
IAEA	460		325	34	819	598.2M — 819.3M
IARC	27		22	4	54	45.4M — 53.7M
ICAO	87		128	34	249	223.3M — 248.5M
ICC	188		24	3	215	169.8M — 215.1M
IFAD		349	258	213	820	434.7M — 820.0M
ILO	411	17	393	100	921	673.7M — 921.0M
IMO	43	18		26	87	74.4M — 87.3M
IOM	71	46	3,158	253	3,528	1.2B — 3.5B
IRMCT	69			7	76	80.2M — 76.2M
ISA	9	1	0	3	12	10.0M — 12.5M
ITC	40	3	108	8	160	76.3M — 159.5M
ITLOS	13	4	1	1	18	11.7M — 18.1M
ITU	153		23	56	231	173.5M — 231.1M
OPCW	68		12	3	83	87.7M — 83.3M
PAHO	105		234	807	1,147	850.1M — 1.1B
UN Tourism	16		11	5	32	25.1M — 31.8M
UN Women	10	109	476	24	619	236.2M — 619.1M
UNAIDS		153	61	8	223	266.0M — 222.5M
UNCCD	8		10	2	21	29.8M — 20.6M
UNCDF		5	156	7	168	59.7M — 167.6M
UNDP		548	4,822	565	5,934	5.7B — 5.9B
UNEP	218	79	557	96	951	395.1M — 950.8M
UNESCO	291	62	322	172	847	764.6M — 846.7M
UNFCCC	33	0	55	28	116	85.7M — 115.7M
UNFPA		364	1,091	223	1,678	890.2M — 1.7B
UN-HABITAT	17	4	173	37	231	198.3M — 230.7M
UNHCR	50	587	3,947	123	4,707	1.9B — 4.7B
UNICEF		1,350	7,144	438	8,932	3.7B — 8.9B
UNIDO	79		260	34	373	335.4M — 372.9M
UNITAID		151	29	36	215	190.7M — 215.3M
UNITAR			11	32	43	20.9M — 43.3M
UNODC	35	7	417	71	529	259.4M — 529.4M
UNOPS				1,280	1,280	90.5M — 1.3B
UNRWA	38	718	737	40	1,533	408.7M — 1.5B
UNSSC		5	16	1	23	11.3M — 22.6M
UNU		21	32	65	118	61.5M — 117.8M
UPU	45		41	30	117	40.0M — 116.6M
WFP		624	8,150	350	9,124	4.3B — 9.1B
WHO	494	237	2,564	46	3,341	2.3B — 3.3B
WIPO	21		10	553	584	310.1M — 583.7M
WMO	81	2	30	1	115	99.1M — 114.6M
WTO	235		26	3	264	236.7M — 264.3M
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,848</b>	<b>5,737</b>	<b>40,980</b>	<b>7,057</b>	<b>67,621</b>	<b>39.6B — 67.6B</b>

i) Values are rounded and slight differences in totals may occur. ii) Values shown as zero in the table represent amounts below US\$ 1 million. iii) UNV and UNICRI revenues are included under UNDP and UNODC, respectively. Source: Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). For notes – see page 110

Fig 1. Evolution of earmarked funding.

2.3. Regulatory fatigue and loss of credibility. The UN also faces regulatory inflation without the capacity to implement. The number of resolutions, summits and declarative frameworks has multiplied, but compliance is minimal.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a prime example: with five years to go until 2030, less than 20% of the targets show substantial progress, and the most critical ones are falling behind. With only one in six of the 2030 Agenda targets on track for

achievement, the signal is alarming: the sustainability clock is ticking without the global engine accelerating. While approximately half of the targets are progressing slowly, more than a third are stagnating or regressing in key sectors such as hunger, cities, oceans and institutions. According to the UN report, the world has already entered a "development emergency"<sup>7</sup>.

This gap between discourse and action generates regulatory fatigue that undermines institutional credibility<sup>8</sup>. Public opinion perceives the UN as a rhetorical forum, incapable of influencing reality.

2.4. The political backdrop: mistrust and sovereignty. Ultimately, the crisis of multilateralism is not only institutional or financial, but also ideological. Globalization has created winners and losers, and many governments perceive international norms as an obstacle to their sovereignty or national projects. Anti-UN rhetoric—that associates global agendas with moral or economic interference—has become politically profitable. Donald Trump's case is paradigmatic, but not unique: the rise of sovereignty in Europe, Latin America and Asia reinforces national withdrawal and erodes political support for the multilateral system.

### 3. Trump's legacy and the return of strategic nationalism

Donald Trump's first term (2017-2021) marked a turning point in US foreign policy and the history of multilateralism. Under the slogan "America First", the White House replaced cooperative diplomacy with a transactional strategy based on the calculation of immediate benefits. Trump not only reduced contributions to United Nations agencies, but also redefined the role of the US as an international power, shifting from guarantor of the liberal order to an actor that considers it a burden.

3.1. Erosion of US moral leadership. Since 1945, US leadership in the UN had been ambiguous but consistent, alternating between pragmatism and the defense of the ideal of global governance. Trump broke with that tradition by openly questioning the

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/with-less-than-one-fifth-of-targets-on-track?>

<sup>8</sup> Fues, T. (2024). "Normative Fatigue in Global Governance." *Journal of Global Policy Studies*, 16(2), 88–104.

foundations of the liberal order. He denounced multilateral trade agreements, withdrew from the Paris Agreement, left the Human Rights Council and UNESCO, and cut funding to the WHO in the midst of a pandemic. This behaviour represented the crystallization of a structural malaise within US politics: the perception that multilateralism benefits rivals rather than taxpayers. In his speech to the 2018 General Assembly, Trump summed up this vision with an emblematic phrase: "We reject the ideology of globalism and embrace the doctrine of patriotism." Behind this rhetoric lay the conviction that hegemony should be exercised selectively, not institutionally<sup>9</sup>.

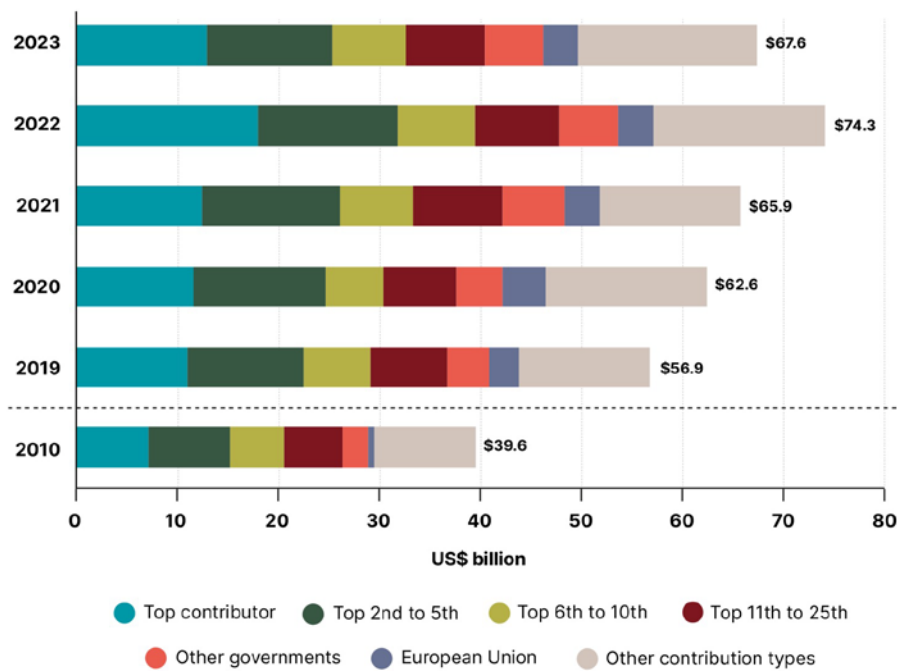


Fig 3 UN budget contributors. Source: UN Multipartner Trust Fund

3.2. The internationalization of Trumpism. The impact of Trumpism transcended the borders of the United States. In the Western hemisphere, governments such as those of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Nayib Bukele in El Salvador adopted a narrative of radical sovereignty, replicating the criticism of "international bureaucrats". In Europe, Viktor Orbán and Matteo Salvini promoted similar views, weakening the European Union's internal consensus on foreign policy. Trump thus contributed to the global legitimization of strategic nationalism, understood as a doctrine that prioritizes autonomy over common rules.

<sup>9</sup> Nye, J. (2023). *Do Morals Matter?* Oxford University Press.

3.3. The return of Trumpism and the de-Westernization of the order. The return of Trumpism in 2025 — whether under its original leader or under an ideologically aligned administration — consolidates this trend. Current US foreign policy combines economic pragmatism with distrust of collective diplomacy. Washington promotes ad hoc alliances (AUKUS, QUAD, bilateral energy agreements) to the detriment of universal forums. Meanwhile, China and Russia are taking advantage of the leadership vacuum to project an alternative vision of sovereignty, centered on non-interference and technological control. This 'de-Westernization' of the global order <sup>10</sup> reinforces the marginalization of the UN: without the political and financial commitment of the US, the organization lacks the historical driving force that sustained its legitimacy for eight decades<sup>11</sup>.

#### **4. The UN in the new fragmented order**

The international system of 2025 is characterized by unprecedented fragmentation. There is no longer a single center of gravity: power is distributed among multiple poles, alliances and thematic coalitions. In this context, the UN has lost its capacity for strategic coordination, becoming a reactive rather than a normative actor.

4.1. Multiplication of forums and erosion of centrality. The rise of platforms such as the G-20, BRICS+, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and CELAC has shifted part of global deliberation outside the UN framework. These spaces offer more agile and politically less costly governance for states, although often without mechanisms for accountability and. Meanwhile, the UN maintains its technical function—humanitarian agencies, health, development—but lacks political relevance.

4.2. Crisis of normative legitimacy. The legitimacy of the UN has been compromised by the double standards of the powers. The Security Council's inability to stop the Russian invasion of Ukraine or to impose a ceasefire in Gaza demonstrates the mismatch between its founding principles and geopolitical reality. The rule of international humanitarian law is being eroded by selective impunity, and multilateral sanctions are applied in a fragmented manner. This loss of symbolic authority fuels the disaffection of

---

<sup>10</sup> Mahbubani, K. (2020). *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy*. PublicAffairs.

<sup>11</sup> Walt, S. M. (2022). "The Death of Globalism." *Foreign Policy*.

the Global South, which perceives the UN structure as an instrument of the North. In turn, Western powers are frustrated by inaction and opt for parallel mechanisms, accelerating the vicious circle of irrelevance.

4.3. The technological dimension and new challenges. The current global order introduces issues that the UN is barely able to address: artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, climate change, militarization of space, biosecurity<sup>12</sup>. Attempts to create multilateral regimes in these areas clash with national interests and the asymmetry of technological capabilities. The UN system, designed for classic state conflicts, lacks the legal and financial tools to manage these hybrid challenges.

4.4. The residual but indispensable role<sup>13</sup>. Despite everything, the UN retains undeniable symbolic and operational value. Its network of agencies, peacekeeping missions and logistical capacity remain essential for managing humanitarian and health crises. However, this "residual" function is only sustainable if it maintains a minimum level of political legitimacy<sup>14</sup>. Otherwise, it risks becoming a luxury global NGO, without power or direction.

---

<sup>12</sup> United Nations University (UNU-CRIS, 2024). *Technology and Global Governance Report*.

<sup>13</sup> Acharya, A. (2021). *Multilateralism in a Multipolar World: From Collective Security to Collective Responsibility*. *International Affairs*, 97(3), 641–659.

<sup>14</sup> Weiss, T. G. & Daws, S. (2020). *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*. Oxford University Press.

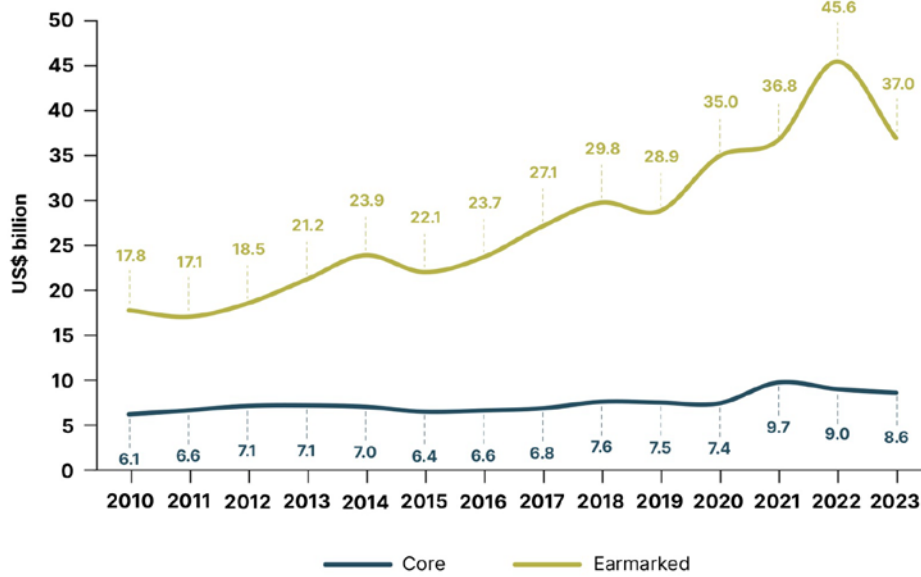


Fig 4 Humanitarian aid budget. Source: UN Multipartner Trust Office

## 5. Scenarios for the next decade

Based on the trends described above, three plausible trajectories can be anticipated for the evolution of the multilateral system in the near future.

5.1. Functional irrelevance: the UN as an institutional relic. In this scenario, the decline of multilateralism is consolidated. The UN remains an administrative structure responsible for humanitarian, health and development tasks, but without political influence. The Security Council becomes a space for rhetoric and vetoes; the General Assembly, a symbolic forum. This outcome would be the result of US isolationism, the instrumental use of the UN by emerging powers, and the absence of consensus on structural reforms.

5.2. Multipolar rebalancing: the UN as a forum for middle powers<sup>15</sup>. A second scenario envisages a partial revitalisation driven by middle powers—the European Union, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and Indonesia—that understand the usefulness of cooperation in the face of unbridled competition. These nations could promote gradual reforms: enlargement of the Security Council, creation of funds for global public goods

<sup>15</sup> Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies IEE. Middle Powers: Moving Towards a Multipolar Order CE 225. Madrid 2024

and mechanisms for shared governance on critical issues. This scenario would involve pragmatic and selective multilateralism, with the UN acting as an umbrella for coordination rather than as a hierarchical authority, and a revitalization of these middle powers<sup>16</sup>.

In a context in which advanced economies are turning inwards, middle powers are emerging as the new guarantors of global public goods. Their geopolitical position and experience in crisis management place them in a favorable position to promote initiatives on climate change, public health and debt sustainability. The most recent example is Brazil's proposal, during its presidency of the G20, to establish a global tax on large fortunes in order to finance climate action<sup>17</sup>. If successful, this measure could mobilize hundreds of billions of dollars and help close the financing gap affecting low-income countries<sup>18</sup>.

However, it is unlikely that the middle powers will become a homogeneous bloc with significant international influence. Their strategic and economic interests are too disparate to articulate a common agenda on security or development. So far, their collective impact has been limited: the BRICS, created in 2009 as a counterweight to the G7, have offered more symbolic gestures than tangible results<sup>19</sup>. The recent expansion of the group—that now includes Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates—increases its demographic and geo-economic weight, but also its heterogeneity. The absence of a shared vision makes it difficult to imagine coordinated and sustained action over time.

A widespread view among economists and political scientists is that the balance of the global economy requires a hegemon willing to bear the costs of the system. According to the theory of "hegemonic stability," only a dominant power can guarantee free trade, protect maritime routes, and enforce international rules, as was the case with the United Kingdom under the gold standard or the United States after 1945. From this perspective, multipolarity would be equivalent to a return to economic disorder and fragmentation.

Nevertheless, this interpretation is insufficient to explain contemporary reality. No state today has any incentive to disconnect from the global system: economic interdependence

<sup>16</sup> Hurrell, A. (2022). "Global Order and the Rise of the Rest." *Survival*, 64(4), 7–24.

<sup>17</sup> *The Economist*, "Brazil's G20 and the Global Wealth Tax Proposal," *The Economist*, June 2024.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Closing the Climate Finance Gap*, Report 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Stuenkel, O. (2022). *The BRICS and the Future of Global Order*. Lexington Books

is too deep<sup>20</sup>. Each country combines, to varying degrees, openness and protectionism, depending on its capabilities and industrial priorities. In practice, governments act as arbiters of their own integration into the global economy, balancing national interests with the need for cooperation.

An ideal scenario would be for the United States—eventually alongside China—to once again assume leadership in the provision of global public goods, from climate financing to technology transfer for decarbonisation<sup>21</sup>. However, the willingness of the major powers to play that role is limited. Advanced economies are showing growing fatigue with responsibility, reluctant to bear the costs of global governance, and there is no indication that this trend will reverse in the short term.

Recent experience has also shown that hegemonic power can be both benevolent and coercive. The same structures that facilitate cooperation can be used to impose rules that favor particular interests or to sanction states that deviate from the hegemon's guidelines. The United States' extraterritorial punitive measures against Iran or Russia illustrate how economic interdependence can be transformed into an instrument of political coercion<sup>22</sup>.

Consequently, the main contribution of middle powers could be to offer an alternative model of governance: to demonstrate that multipolarity can be viable and compatible with international stability. Their example can serve to outline a more balanced order, where leadership is exercised in a distributed and responsible manner. However, to fulfil this role, they must consolidate themselves as predictable and transparent actors, committed both to regional cooperation and to greater internal accountability<sup>23</sup>.

5.3. Structural reinvention: the UN as a global governance network. The most ambitious scenario involves a conceptual transformation of multilateralism. Instead of a pyramidal, state-centric organization, a networked UN would emerge, coordinating thematic platforms and flexible alliances. This model would allow non-state actors—companies, universities, NGOs, cities—to be integrated into the formulation of global norms. The Security Council could be transformed into a Global Stability Council, with variable

---

<sup>20</sup> Baldwin, R. (2019). *The Great Convergence: Information Technology and the New Globalization*. Harvard University Press

<sup>21</sup> Nye, J. S. (2024). "Middle Powers and the Future of Global Governance." *Project Syndicate*, January 2024

<sup>22</sup> Tooze, A. (2023). "Sanctions and Power in the Post-Western Order." *Foreign Policy*, 12 April 2023

<sup>23</sup> Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE), *Strategy Notebook 225: Middle Powers. Moving towards a multipolar order*, Madrid, 2024.

representation depending on the nature of the crises. Although visionary, this model responds to a reality: the 21st-century's global challenges—climatic, technological, health—cannot be resolved through structures designed for 1945<sup>24</sup>.

## 6. Conclusions

The abandonment of multilateralism is one of the most significant phenomena in the contemporary international order<sup>25</sup>. This is not a crisis of efficiency, but one of legitimacy and political will. Renouncing the principle of cooperation means accepting a scenario dominated by the law of power.

The UN remains the only universal forum for channeling differences within international law. Trumpism symbolizes the drift towards transactional foreign policy, but it also shows us that global cooperation cannot depend on a single power.

The future of the UN will reflect the balance between power and norms. If the powers opt for immediate interests, multilateralism will become a relic; if they recognize the need for security

Francisco Márquez y de la Rubia  
Main Analyst at IEEE  
[@Fmarquezdlr](#)

---

<sup>24</sup> Amrita Narlikar, "Reimagining Multilateralism for a Fragmented World," *Global Policy Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE) (2024). *Strategy Notebook 229: The Liberal Order in Crisis*.