AFRICA AND THE REMAKING OF GLOBAL ORDER

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Introduction

This paper makes the case for Africa to play a role in remaking global order, based on the need to address geopolitical insecurity as well as the continent's need to redress its historical exclusion from the design of the international system. The paper will develop ideas drawn from an intersection of fields of study including African studies, peace studies, international relations and transitional justice.

The paper begins by proposing an understanding of global order predicated on the notions of the maintenance of peace and security, with an emphasis on the institution that has asserted its mandate to lead on this issue: the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The paper will then utilise this understanding to interrogate the need for a geopolitical paradigm shift in terms of the existing order, and argue for the dismantling of the UNSC and the wider United Nations (UN) system due to its inability to address contemporary crises. Furthermore, the paper will argue that the nefarious activities of the Permanent Members of the UNSC, such as carpet bombing Syria, have transformed this body into a net producer of instability, and that it would be more appropriate to rebrand the institution as the 'UN Insecurity Council'.

The paper argues that the world has reached crisis point due to the historical and continuing geopolitics of exclusion. Consequently, the historical exclusion of a majority of the world in designing and upholding global order needs to be redressed. Concretely, this means that it is necessary to rethink and remake the global order. Geopolitical crisis precipitated by the invasion of Iraq, Libya, Crimea and Yemen suggests that the world is at a tipping point towards even more profound catastrophe and chaos.

The paper then argues that Africa, as a continent, has to put forward its own proposals for how to remake the global order. In achieving this objective, Africa can draw upon its historical experiences as a freedom-seeking continent, based on the insights drawn from the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles that were led by actors across its territory. The continent can also draw upon its own insistence on self-determination, which animated the emergence of the continent's nation states. This is also evident in the work that is being done to advance economic empowerment, which is the ultimate indicator of a continent of people who can determine their self-development and enhance their livelihoods. The continent also reveals that pan-African solidarity was prevalent and is re-emerging based on the support that countries under the yoke of colonialism and apartheid received from their fellow African states and societies. However, there is still much more to be done to translate pan-African solidarity into interventions that will consolidate

and entrench democratic governance across the continent. Africa also continues to struggle for a more just world and more equitable global order. As targets of historical injustice, Africans continue to lead the promotion of justice – understood in this instances as fairness, equality, accountability and redress for harm done in the past. Consequently, Africa has the authority to pronounce on how a more just world order can be reconfigured. And finally, African societies have provided examples of how to promote reconciliation between the various groups, societies and communities around the world, epitomised by the work of Nelson Mandela in South Africa but evident in other regional, national and communal initiatives of citizens across the continent. Consequently, Africans are also 'reconciliactors', evident in the posture that was adopted by African governments and societies when the external colonisers left the continent. There was no rush to seek revenge and vengeance against colonisers for the brutal and dehumanising system that they had imposed on the people of the continent.

By drawing upon these pan-African experiences, this paper will put forward proposals for radical global transformation predicated on the pursuit of human freedom and self-determination, global solidarity, justice and reconciliation. The paper will discuss the dismantling of the UN system, particularly the Security Council, and its replacement with new institutions that seek to deepen global democracy, based on a renewal of principles of human freedom, solidarity, justice and reconciliation, which we can draw from Africa's own historical experiences. The paper will conclude by discussing the practical steps towards the remaking of the global order and examine the limitations that could confront such an initiative.

Global order in context

What do we mean by 'global order'? Other bodies and institutions have been designed to contribute to the maintenance of international order, such as the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and regional organisations. However, this paper emphasises the international system for the maintenance of peace and security, due to its centrality in pursuing and sustaining global order. Consequently, for the purposes of this paper, global order refers to the international system of rule-making, decision-making and compliance embodied primarily by, but not restricted to, the UNSC.

Power politics and the failure to maintain global order

A historical contextualisation of international relations reveals that, during the Cold War, power politics and self-interest infiltrated the institutions that were designed to maintain global order. This followed a period between the First and Second World Wars in which the idealism that animated the League of Nations was viewed as inimical to the practice of international politics. What the sceptics of idealism failed to grasp was that it was normative ideology towards which humanity was perpetually travelling. Its absence in geopolitical practice did not necessarily confirm its invalidity. The emergence of fascist and totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan confirmed, in the eyes of some observers, that international relations were indeed nasty, brutish and short. However, the collective effort of countries all around the world to contain the excesses of the fascist and totalitarian regimes demonstrated how humanity could

activate its agency and be inspired by certain ideals to remake the world in an image that would uphold their freedom and well-being, as will be discussed further below.

Political realism, which stepped in to fill in the ideological gap exposed in the perceived limitations of idealism, conceptualises international relations as a realm in which power politics is fundamental, if not all encompassing. A central tenet of realism is that the primary actors in the international system, nation states, are first and foremost self-interested rational actors who operate through systems of alliances (Inbar 1991: 72). The persistence of realpolitik has led many analysts and practitioners of international relations to view it as permanent feature of reality, rather than an ideology – like its predecessor, idealism, which has its ideologues and its advocates. Scant or no attention is paid, from the realpolitik perspective, to the moral interests of the disputants or or to the creation of appropriate conditions for generating an outcome that will be owned and internalised by the parties. Consequently, in the grand battle of selfish interests, in which life is nasty, brutish and short, humanity has veered dangerously towards its own self-destruction. In effect, political realism, as an ideology that appeals to the baser instincts of human beings, has within it the seeds of humanity's demise and destruction. Realpolitik, and its array of practices evident in brinkmanship and sabotage, is unlikely to promote global order and is, in fact, undermining any efforts to stabilise international relations in the 21st century.

The Cold War led to the geopolitical stand-off between the Western bloc, led by the United States of America (US) and western European countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the former USSR and Eastern bloc countries that were part of the Warsaw Pact. In effect, these blocs were viewed as a bipolar system for the maintenance of a balance of power. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s heralded the prospects for a new kind of thinking. However, the US and its NATO allies opted, instead, for a triumphalist posture informed by the realpolitik prism, and continued their policy of co-optation, coercion, or confrontation with its post-Soviet foes, notably Russia.

The opportunity to view the world through a different lens, one which would advance international cooperation and reduce adversarial geopolitics, was lost by the heavy-handed approach that the US and its allies adopted towards the rest of the world (Touval & Zartman 1995). The Middle East, which had fuelled economic growth in the West through the extraction of oil and other minerals, remained predominantly under the yoke of authoritarian regimes for as long as its nations pledged fealty and allegiance to the West. The willingness of the West to support and finance authoritarian regimes in the Middle East spawned the extremist ideologies that erupted to contest the legitimacy of the dictators who suppressed their own people with reckless abandon, while transferring the mineral wealth of their people to their geopolitical masters in Washington, London and Paris. This narrative repeated itself in Africa, where dictators were more beholden to their Western paymasters than to their own people. In 2016, the Panama Papers revealed the collusion of elites in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa with off-shore interests. The net effect of this has been unstable countries and regions, which are fertile ground for extremist ideology to flourish.

In this volatile context, the ideology of political realism continues to be received as the gospel, rather than as an aberration and an anachronistic world view that does not contribute towards advancing the cause of global order. The legacy of this type persists and continues to corrode the prospects for a more humane approach to contemporary international relations.

This type of thinking continues to orient the world towards the brink of a geopolitical abyss and the re-emergence of global conflict, as has been witnessed

recently through the renewal of tensions between the West and Russia that is partly, but not exclusively, due to NATO's eastward expansionism. The type of thinking that precipitated the global crisis is still being proposed as the basis for remaking and remoulding the world in the 21st century.

Kissingerian illusions of world order: The paucity of political realism

One of the leading proponents of the ideology of political realism, Henry Kissinger, applied this frame of thinking in executing his role as US Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. An archetypal realist statesman, Kissinger did not hesitate to place the self-interest of the US ahead those of the societies in which it was intervening with disastrous consequences for the innocent civilians in these countries. For example, between March 1969 and May 1970, Kissinger was a leading proponent of 'Operation Menu' and his advice to former president Richard Nixon was instrumental in unleashing a bombing campaign against Cambodia and Laos to target their adversaries the Viet Cong, who were waging a war of resistance against the US incursion in their territory. It is estimated that between 50 000 and 150 000 people, including innocent civilians, were killed during this US bombing of Cambodia and Laos. Grandin argues that, following Kissinger's advice, 'Nixon introduced us to permanent, extrajudicial war in Southeast Asia, and *it continues today in the Middle East*' (Grandin 2015). Ultimately, the US lost the Vietnam war to the Viet Cong, and utilised a face-saving peace agreement in Paris to extract itself from this violent conflagration. The legacy of this approach to relations between states has had a disastrous effect on the practice of international relations today, as will be discussed below in the cases of the Iraq, Syria and Libya invasions (Zartman 1989: 220).

Kissinger's most recent book, entitled *World Order*, is a short-sighted meditation that repeats the laborious and self-destructive tenets of political realism and focuses on how the US will continue to leverage its power in the chaotic world it has bequeathed to humanity (Kissinger 2014). It is framed exclusively through the realpolitik prism and considers the emerging threat to the Western axis that is posed by Asia (specifically China), Russia and the perennial crisis in the Middle East, which has paradoxically been exacerbated by Western interventionism. In an act of marginalisation, Africa as a continent does not feature in Kissinger's calculus for a new and emerging international system, as he does not dedicate any amount of analysis to considering the continent's position or role in forging a new international system. Consequently, there is a call for African thinkers to advance their own ideas on this issue. In referring to China's contestation of American power, Kissinger argues that 'a rising power may reject the role allotted to it by a system it did not design, and the established powers may prove unable to adapt the system's equilibrium to incorporate its rise' (Kissinger 2014: 366–367). Kissinger further suggests that 'the emergence of China poses a comparable structural challenge in the 21st century' (Kissinger 2014: 367). The idea that 'a rising power' should subscribe to a 'role allotted to it' reveals what is wrong with the realist prism in framing how the US should position itself against what presumably would be contenders to its throne. This self-delusional notion of the US as the imperial force that assigns roles and functions to its cohorts in return for papal fealty is deeply flawed and erroneous thinking that will only further precipitate global crisis. The flawed nature of this thinking is evident in the endless and permanent wars that Washington is failing to contain, suggesting that there are extremely high levels of incompetence in the practice of international relations, or that the ideology that is informing action is intentionally misguided, or both.

Kissinger (2014: 371) argues correctly that 'a reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge to statesmanship in our time', and his book is focused on this issue. Kissinger's proposal to remake the world through a political realism lens is, however, counter-intuitive and self-destructive, because this is the type of thinking that has brought the world to the brink of catastrophe in the second decade of the 21st century. The type of thinking that orients you to a crisis is unlikely the type of thinking that will extract you from it. The paucity of this thinking is self-evident in its problematic reluctance to acknowledge that human beings can alter their behaviour to create alternative outcomes. Consequently, it is necessary to question the continuing prevalence of this type of thinking as it applies to the realm of international order and the pursuit of global order.

The invention of the United Nations and the promise of global order

Following the subjugation of the fascist and totalitarian powers at the end of the Second World War, the wartime allies decided to construct a new framework for the post-war world order. The United Nations organisation was the progeny of this endeavour and its primary purpose was to ensure that there was an institutional mechanism that would encourage its members to 'settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered' (United Nations Charter, Chapter I, Article 2). Through the mechanisms of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the UN was provided with the ability to oversee the peaceful settlement of disputes. Specifically, Article 33 of Chapter VI of the UN Charter (1945) states that 'the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement'.

The Charter of the UN designated the world body as being the primary vehicle responsible for promoting international peace and security. In order to operationalise these interventions, the broad range of institutions within the UN system could be utilised. On this basis, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the UN is the composite formation of its Secretariat, member states and numerous agencies.

As the institution empowered by the Charter to promote peace and security, the UNSC is the most powerful of these institutions and has a primary responsibility to create and establish the framework conditions for other branches and institutions of the UN system, as well as regional organisations, to contribute towards the peaceful resolution of disputes and the maintenance of global order. Consequently, it is the central focus of this paper's analysis.

Regional organisations

Regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also have an important role to play in pursuing global order. Specifically, Article 52 of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter states that 'the Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council'

(United Nations 1945). However, when the conditions on the ground are not conducive to the operationalisation of peace and security – for example, in situations where armed militia are still projecting violence – then regional organisations generally have to defer to the UNSC, which has the power to authorise robust engagement with armed groups if necessary.

Structure betrayed: Co-opting and corrupting the UN

For the UN, what seemed, initially, to be a resourceful array of mechanisms and processes for resolving conflict were soon to be confronted by the structural limitations and egotistical imperatives of the superpowers that dominated the Cold War era. These superpowers (the US and USSR) and their client states within the UN framework formed de facto alliances along ideological lines and institutionalised a global oligarchy of power. This appropriation of global power manifested itself through the dominance of the UNSC in all major decisions, and meant that the UN's ability to resolve conflicts and build peace became structurally paralysed by the whims of the most powerful countries in the system, namely the US, Russia, China, the UK and France. Rarely, if at all, did the interests of the US or the USSR, and subsequently Russia, converge. The greatest threat to international peace and security therefore arose from this latent and ongoing conflict between the UNSC's most powerful members. Power politics or realpolitik as an ideology of interstate relations co-opted the UN and in effect instrumentalised the world body.

The Cold War period witnessed over 150 armed conflicts, which claimed 25 to 30 million lives; the notion that any modicum of 'global order' existed during this period is derisory and deluded. If we were to issue a scorecard to the UN system for maintaining global order during this period, we would have to adjudicate it as having been an abysmal failure. In the climate of East–West competition, the mechanisms and strategies for managing and resolving conflicts and upholding global order relied on coercive political negotiations in the context of the prevailing superpower rivalry. In effect, the involvement of other collective security organisations and third parties was restrained and possible only in conflicts in which the great powers did not have a direct stake or in which they had shared interests. So, even though the UN established what could have served as institutions capable of advancing the quest for global order, it was severely undermined by the exigencies of Machiavellian superpower politics during the Cold War.

Efforts to revive the UN's role in achieving global order

Given the corruption of the UN's conflict management and resolution institutions and processes during the Cold War, there was an attempt to revitalise the norms that initially animated the UN. The former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, published *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992, which argued for proactive peace-making and humanitarian intervention. It outlined suggestions for enabling the UN to respond quickly and effectively to threats to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era. In particular, four major areas of activity were identified, namely: preventive diplomacy; peace-making; peacekeeping; and post-conflict peace-building (United Nations 1992). The UN has subsequently made attempts to revitalise the commitment to preventing crises through its adoption of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine in 2005, following the annual meeting of the General Assembly. This doctrine has also

failed to become infused into the practices of international relations and currently there is more a culture of retroactive, rather than proactive, interventions. These interventions were designed to work in tandem with collaborative contributions towards maintaining global order, an in-depth assessment of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The continuing failure of the UNSC: A retrospective

Despite these efforts to reform the UNSC, the continuing failure of the body has remained a feature of international relations, which suggests that the time for genuine and radical change is now long overdue. *An Agenda for Peace* was issued two years before the Rwandan genocide and three years before the Srebrenica genocide. The noble intentions articulated in *An Agenda for Peace* turned out to be empty rhetoric with disastrous consequences for millions of people in Africa, the Balkans and Asia who died as a result of the failure to translate well-intentioned policy proposals into concrete and effective interventions.

The Rwandan genocide

The most compelling failure of the UNSC to prevent and manage a crisis was the Rwandan genocide of April 1994. The UNSC was in a position to intervene through a range of instruments to prevent the crisis from escalating to a genocide, given the fact that the governments of the P5 were informed, on 12 January 1994, by General Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), of the plans that were underway in registering Tutsi for their extermination across Rwanda.

Kofi Annan (2012: 56), former UN Secretary-General, argues in his memoirs *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* that 'there was the later claim that members of the Security Council were unaware of the warning conveyed by Dallaire's informant. Given that permanent Council members, particularly the United States and France, had far more advanced and established intelligence-gathering capabilities in Rwanda than UNAMIR, this could not have been true'. In effect, Annan is accusing the US and France, members of the P5, of having lied about knowing that the Rwandan genocide was imminent prior to the event. If true, this is a damning indictment by a former head of the organisation. In effect, the body tasked with preventing the crisis was actively eschewing its responsibilities out of the short-term self-interest of its powerful members, and was hamstrung by a realpolitik ideology. Rwanda was, in effect, thrown under the proverbial geopolitical bus in terms of the refusal of the P5 of the UNSC to intervene to uphold a mandate of which they assert to be the guardians. The tragedy of the Rwandan genocide has left a debilitating scar on the conscience of Rwanda, Africa and the world. It was one of the initial motivating factors in Africa's initiative to develop its own continental peace and security architecture.

The Srebrenica genocide

Shortly, after the Rwandan tragedy, Bosnian Muslims were massacred in the genocide of Srebrenica, which implicated Dutch peacekeepers who were supposed to be manning the so-called UN safe havens in which the embattled Bosnians were sheltered. The

obscene paradox of a UN safe haven becoming a site for untold and unspeakable war crimes and crimes against humanity summarises the dysfunctionality of the UN system and further reinforces the need for it to be rethought.

The global crisis of legitimacy and a return to ad hocery

The period prior to the emergence of the League of Nations was defined by an ad hoc approach to resolving international crises (Walters 1952). A century later, this phenomenon of ad hocery is increasingly returning to define the international relations landscape. The return of ad hocery in international relations is a cause for concern. It suggests that, instead of upholding its original purpose of maintaining 'international peace and security' as well as taking 'effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace' (Article 1), the UN is failing to create the conditions and convene the necessary platforms for resolving global crises.

Russia, NATO and the precipitous increase in wars of aggression

A more worrying phenomenon is that the UN's erstwhile commitment to engage in efforts to promote the conditions for peace have been replaced by a precipitous withdrawal from, and ambivalence towards, volatile conflict situations, from the ISIS insurrection in Iraq and Syria to the Ukrainian–Russian crisis, as well as Saudi Arabia's cavalier invasion of Yemen, which it is now struggling to contain and over which it is now requesting Israel's assistance (Benjamin 2016).

Robert Gates (2014: 168), former US Secretary of Defense and former Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), observes that, when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, 'the Russians were also sending a warning to other governments in Central Asia (and Ukraine) about the risks of trying to integrate with NATO'. Gates, a cabinet official who served both President Bush and President Obama, was aware that Russia, a P5 member of the UNSC, is consistent in reasserting its willingness to act when faced with an encroachment in its 'traditional sphere of influence, including the Caucasus' (Gates 2014: 168). In effect, following Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the US and fellow P5 members, were aware that Ukraine's overtures to NATO would be met with Russian aggression, which is what subsequently materialised in 2014. In effect, Washington was aware of Moscow's rejection of any eastward NATO expansion, yet successive US governments, intoxicated by the triumphalism of the end of the Cold War, have continued this eastward expansion rather than decommissioning and dismantling NATO, which is what should have happened. The ad hoc German and French mediation between Russia and Ukraine with regards to the incipient and escalating crisis is resistant to UN intervention because of Russia's prominent position as a member of the P5, which empowers it with a veto to restrict UNSC action.

Israel and Palestine

The Israel and Palestine crisis has been immune to UN engagement due to the consistent bias that successive US governments have demonstrated towards Israeli interests. Successive US administrations have regularly utilised their veto within the UNSC to prevent any substantive sanctioning of Israeli actions against Palestine,

most notably the 2008 Israeli attack on Gaza. Consequently, this conflict remains a dangerous catalyst for the spreading contagion of geopolitical disorder.

The Syrian conflict and the crisis of global legitimacy: A metaphor for the tipping point of global insecurity

If there was any need for further evidence to demonstrate that the world is at a tipping point in terms of global insecurity, then the Syrian crisis provides us with a perfect prism through which to witness this precipitous fragmentation and the ensuing implosion of global order. The 2011 Syrian crisis, which has morphed into an internecine war of all against all, has proven particularly resistant to the interventions of the UN system. Meetings of the UNSC on Syria consistently degenerate into ineffectual gatherings due to the juvenile brinksmanship of the P5 members of the body. The P5 are divided on how to address the crisis, with the P3 (US, UK and France) broadly insisting on Bashar al-Assad's withdrawal from leadership of the fragmented state, while the P2 (Russia and China) remain defiant in guaranteeing him support. Consequently, in this particular instance, the real victims of this UNSC paralysis are the innocent children, women and men of Syria. To add fuel to the fire, the insidious ISIS militia are already operational in Syria and the prospect of finding a sustainable solution recedes with every day that the UNSC vacillates and postures through its adherence to realpolitik and brinkmanship. Consequently, Syria is a prism and a metaphor for the geopolitical bankruptcy of the current system that is tasked with promoting global order.

Four out of five members of the P5, namely the US, UK, France and Russia (collectively the P4), are inordinately busy bombing Syria into smithereens, in an elusive and flawed quest to contain the ISIS threat, which is more a function of extremist thinking than concretely identifiable targets in the conventional sense of armed conflict. These gratuitous bombing raids are targeting the symptoms of the Syrian crisis, and not its causes. It is noteworthy that the initial bombing campaign in Syria began without the express authorisation of the UNSC. Subsequently, the UNSC pronounced itself on Syria, but in doing so it retroactively 'authorised' the initial 'crime of aggression', which is in direct violation of Article 39 of its own UN Charter. In effect, four of the five permanent members of the UNSC, who behave like self-ascribed masters of the planet, are involved in bombing in Syria in direct violation of the UN Charter, which pledged 'to save successive generations from the scourge of violence'.

This P4 orgy of bombing in Syria, and the atrocities that are being meted out on innocent civilians, is in direct violation of the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations which, as dominant members of the UNSC, they are pledged to uphold and 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind'. If there was any need for confirmation, the 'P4 atrocities' in Syria are the most definitive evidence of the precipitous disintegration of the international system as we know it, and the concomitant escalation of global insecurity. The 'untold sorrow' that the P4 is unleashing upon the Syrian people and neighbouring countries will have to be dealt with in the future.

The geopolitical lunatics have taken over the planetary asylum, and they are trying to convince the rest of the world that the 70-year-old vehicles, including the UNSC, that humanity designed to secure its peaceful coexistence are still fit for purpose. Yet these institutional vehicles have been dismantled by their own actions. It will

be impossible to continue towards humanity's destination of peace and security if the vehicles have been compromised by the lunatics who still ascribe to themselves the titles of permanent members of the UNSC. China's repressive policies within its territory, evident in the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, its conquest of Tibet and its posture towards Taiwan, does not redeem it from this notorious warmongering P5 quintet of power whose members behave like self-ascribed masters of the planet. These violations suggest that, as things stand, the P5 members of the UNSC, through their violations of the founding document that was intended to regulate the behaviour of states, have now demonstrated that they have no regard for the UN Charter.

Copycat acts: Does international order exist?

This then begs the question, as to why any other member of the UN system should respect any of its Security Council resolutions and any aspect of international law more broadly. If the self-appointed 'guards' of international peace and security, as entrenched in the UN Charter, are some of the prime sources of violations and agents of global insecurity, then it is self-evidently the end of UN system as expressed in the preamble of the Charter. These hegemonic violations by the P5 have also manifested in other parts of the world and, more importantly, have encouraged copycat behaviour from other less-powerful countries. Other copycat acts around the world beg the question as to whether 'international order', in the traditional sense by which it is understood, actually exists – or whether it is a geopolitical illusion that continues to bewitch the majority of the planet.

As discussed above, the adherence to the current configuration of an undemocratic United Nations is a perilous path for the international community to take. The is occurring in the so-called geopolitical margins of international relations. Since the demise of the Cold War, the Balkans, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and select regions of Latin America have witnessed the effervescence of violent political unrest and the direct challenge to state formations. This global occurrence is another indicator that the state-centric configuration of postcolonial societies is also proving to be an anachronism.

Other challenges to the UN system

Sub-national contestations of the state

The UN system is, in effect, a club of nation states and is singularly handicapped when it comes to resolving disputes between illegitimate governments and the armed militia that seek to overthrow them through violent means. This demonstrates that the UN is not an adequate forum for sub-national groups to direct their grievances towards. This escalation of sub-national contestations against the state should have served as a clear signal that the UN had reached its systemic limits and needed to transform itself in order to become more accessible to non-state actors, but this has not happened (Polman 2003).

Paradoxically, a number of sub-national formations, such as Palestine and Kurdistan, aspire to become states of their own in order to assure their positions in the UN club of states. However, if they were to achieve statehood, the UN would still be tasked with managing the demands of the minorities that will end up existing within Palestinian and Kurdish borders.

The global refugee crisis

According to the the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we are experiencing the greatest refugee flow since the Second World War, with an estimated 65 million people having been forced to leave their countries due to crises. It is easy, through the comfort of distance, to feel no empathy for the plight of these millions of people. However, as human beings and given our complicated histories fraught with narratives of oppression, it is incumbent upon us rather to identify how we can promote the 'un-learning' of these erroneous, ill-thought-out strategies and attitudes of aggression, dominion and control.

International terrorism

Another global event that poses a challenge to the UN is the escalation of international terrorism. The UN has become incoherent in its approach to defining and dealing with terrorism because some of its own members could be accused of being 'terrorist' in nature. Terrorism is not the central issue: the key problem is the absence of an international system that can effectively provide would-be terrorists with a means to articulate their grievances in non-violent ways.

History is increasingly replete with erstwhile so-called terrorists who are now feted by the international community as statesmen, including Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Gerry Adams of Northern Ireland and the late Yasser Arafat, who passed before he could witness the birth of an independent Palestine. Incidentally, in 2010 the issue of Palestine was being addressed through an ad hoc mediation process with the tangential support of the UN, but the UN is not an adequate forum for overseeing these negotiations. The key point is that, if the international system had been configured in a way that would pre-emptively flag the concerns and grievances of these erstwhile terrorists and their sub-national constituencies, then a considerable amount of bloodshed and suffering could have been avoided.

Redressing historical injustices

In the early decades of the UN, there was an asymmetrical partnership between the body and the parts of the world that were still under the colonial yoke, notably Asia and Africa. Newly independent Asian and African states were just beginning to establish their political, social and economic footing. As a collective, Asian and African countries were not in a position to influence policy at the UN. In most instances, postcolonial Asian and African states were beholden – and still are, economically at least – to their former colonial powers. These colonial powers maintained an attitude of paternalism toward their post-colonies, which was a logical progression from the era of colonialism. It is therefore not surprising that the UN system, particularly in its attitudes, would adopt a similar stance, given the fact that it was, and still is, politically, economically and financially dominated by former colonial powers and Cold War superpowers.

Given the asymmetrical relationship that the UN had with Asia and Africa, particularly in the early years, a culture of paternalism developed between the organisation and the continent. Since then, Asia and Africa have been trying to challenge and dispense with paternalistic attitudes from, and within, the UN system. Redesigning the global order is also about confronting the issue of global redress for historical injustices that were visited on the African continent by colonial powers

and the Cold War superpowers. Recent evidence has emerged, for example, that the US's CIA was involved in the arrest of Nelson Mandela in 1962. In addition, Belgian and US regimes were involved in the murder of the first democratically elected Prime Minister of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Patrice Lumumba, which subsequently wrought untold suffering upon the people of the DRC in an endless cycle of crises that remain resistant to resolution.

The callous disregard of the UN system

The evolving theme relating to the callous disregard for the responsibilities of the UN system in general, and the UNSC in particular, can partly be traced to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US and its client state, the United Kingdom, were not willing to allow diplomacy and mediation to resolve the Iraq crisis. The sentiments in Washington and London were that no amount of talking would reassure them of the intentions of the late Saddam Hussein, the erstwhile dictator of Iraq. On this basis, there was clearly no intention, from the US and UK perspective, as two members of the UNSC, to create the conditions for pursuing and achieving a mediated settlement in the case of Iraq.

The Washington–London oligarchy of power

It is safe to say that American leadership has led the world into even more quagmires and intractable conflict situations than it is currently capable of extracting itself from.

The precedent that was set by the Iraq debacle for dealing with those designated as dictators by the self-appointed Washington–London oligarchy of power is to have serious implications for how conflicts are prevented, managed and resolved in the future. The Iraq invasion is directly responsible for the emergence of the ISIS threat that is now threatening to engulf the Middle East, and has infiltrated and committed atrocities in Europe through like-minded extremist groups – including the Charlie Hebdo, Paris and Belgium attacks.

Africa is not off the hook, as the extremist groups in Africa are pledging allegiance to ISIS and increasingly utilising ISIS-style tactics to spread terror on the African continent. Notably, the Boko Haram extremist group in Nigeria, which abducted 200 girls from their society, and Al-Shabaab – which has conducted a range of significant attacks in Kampala, Uganda, the 2013 Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, and the April 2015 attack that killed 147 university students in Garissa University in Northern Kenya – is an increasing scourge that will condemn future generations to a life of war. Consequently, Africa has a strong interest in remaking the global order.

Washington's strategy of aerial bombing and the use of drones will not be sufficient to contain the ISIS threat, which means that the world can expect more atrocities to be committed by this group; the question is only where and when this will happen, not only on the African continent, but elsewhere. In the short term there might not be any easy solutions to address this crisis. However, we can begin to look to the medium and long term for how we can redesign the international system to improve the prospects for enhancing global order.

The UNSC as an instrument of coercion

Instead of undergoing reform, the UNSC has become an instrument whose only utility is now to discipline and coerce other nation states and non-state actors

around the world; this is now only possible when the P5 violators can forge consensus, which is an increasingly rare occurrence. In fact, the majority of the other P9 non-permanent members of the UNSC constantly bemoan the paralysis and dysfunction that has infected the practices and work of the Council. In an editorial, the *Washington Post* (18 January 1995) observes that 'the United States is deeply ambivalent over whether it wants a strong and effective United Nations. Americans would prefer unilateral solutions, but know that they cannot afford them'. Consequently, the world should not be holding its breath, awaiting a non-existent UN reform process somehow to materialise.

The design flaw of the UNSC

Reflecting on that period, Annan (2012: 364) notes in his memoirs *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* that 'the Iraq War was neither in accordance with the Charter nor legitimate'. The illegality of the US-led invasion of Iraq would expose as false the UNSC's claim to uphold the maintenance of international peace and security. In the face of the naked aggression of one of its own P5 members, the UNSC was impotent and rendered irrelevant.

Annan (2012: 366) concludes that 'by behaving the way it did, the United States invited the perception among many in the world – including many long-time allies – that it was becoming a greater threat to global security'. When the US, the most powerful country in the world in terms of political and military capability, willingly and with malicious aforethought disregards the principles and laws of the international system that it helped to create, it is time to redesign the global order. Such behaviour exposes the design flaw in the current UNSC that has empowered and emboldened a P5 member to act with impunity. Cynically, each P5 member utilises the UNSC to advance its own self-interests. And, cynically, each P5 member will try to prevent any efforts to redesign the UNSC.

Annan (2013: 366) argues that if the UN 'does not stand up for the principles of its Charter, it not only places itself outside the law but also loses its legitimacy around the world'. Indeed, the UN's has lost credibility and its legitimacy is routinely being questioned. This has created a dangerous vacuum in terms of the prevention of violent conflict and delegitimised the existing infrastructure for promoting global order, which it had assiduously built over seven decades. The only appropriate course of action for the UNSC is a dignified burial in a metaphorical graveyard of noble but out-of-date institutions.

Linda Polman (2003: 1) endorses this view when she laments that 'the world's most powerful countries manipulate the United Nations to fulfill their own national interests'. In effect, the UNSC is, in some instances, functioning as an interested spoiler in peacemaking efforts around the world. The UNSC is clearly no longer serving the interests of humanity in terms of a genuine commitment to prevent conflicts prior to their overt and damaging escalation.

As a consequence, the UNSC cannot, and should not, inspire any confidence that it can, or will, create the necessary conditions for achieving any modicum of global order. Indeed, the opposite is more likely, that the self-interest and predatory behaviour of its P5 members has rendered the UNSC a clear and present danger to international peace and security. It should more aptly be rebranded as the UN 'Insecurity Council'.

Stillborn attempts to reform the UN

Further attempts at UN reform currently embodied by the Open-ended Working Group is dominated by the discourse about UNSC restructuring and is unlikely to bring about the establishment of global democracy. The likely scenario is that the appearance of progress towards UN reform will continue to plod along for another few decades until some member states come to the realisation about the abject futility of the exercise. If one takes the end of the Cold War as a turning point in history that could have served as a catalytic trigger for establishing global democracy, then, after close to two decades, the general lack of seriousness in bringing about genuine change is evident for all to see. The status quo is fully intact.

As noted above, if powerful P5 members of the UNSC can find it expedient to ignore the legal provisions of the UN Charter, why should any of the 192 members of the UN feel obliged to respect this international institution? In the face of such actions, the idea that the UN can foster global democracy is a delusional one. The UN itself has become an anachronism, a fossilised relic of Second World War power configurations that is on the precipice of a deeply entrenched irrelevancy. The wider issue is that the international system, embodied by the UN and its specialised agencies, is in need of a more pronounced and radical overhaul than the proposed tinkering that is taking place under the guise of UN reform.

The fallacy of UN reform

The UN system still grants governments a monopoly on the representation of their societies, and so it should – this is precisely what its Charter was designed to do when it was adopted over 70 years ago. In this regard, for as long as efforts to bring about change continue to be pursued within the pre-established framework of UN reform, governments will remain the gatekeepers of any proposed institutional models. Similarly, when it comes to the specific issue of UNSC reform, the P5 members of the body will continue to assert and exert a gatekeeper role through their vetoes, in terms of the degree and extent of change that will be permitted. In this regard, the notion of UN reform is a self-evident fallacy, which will be detrimental and inimical to the future well-being and security of middle-level and smaller countries. As discussed above, this was manifest in the tragedies experienced in genocides in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica in 1995, as well as the Iraq invasion of 2003.

States do not have a legitimate claim to be the sole representatives of their societies apart from the legitimacy with which they have imbued themselves. Similarly, the P5 members of the UNSC do not have any legitimate claim to retaining their status apart from a twist of historical fate that saw them effectively 'muscling' their way into membership of this group by virtue of their historically perceived military might.

The suggestion that tinkering with the number of members of the UNSC and extending the veto provision to emerging regional economic powerhouses such as Germany, Japan, India and Brazil (G4), will increase the legitimacy of the body and allegedly 'democratise' the institution through regional representation, is another illusion. A key region such as Africa is completely external to this discourse of UN 'democratisation'. Critiques of the Uniting for Consensus group (which question the basis upon which the G4 members have been selected) are therefore valid and illustrate the self-evident fallacy of UN reform on this premise.

The discourse of UN reform also ignores the issue of whether the wider UN system needs to be transformed. The issue of increasing the funding of the UN to address the range of challenges facing societies around the world adequately has also not been sufficiently addressed in the so-called reform processes. This masks the interest of the powerful members of the UNSC to maintain the status quo.

Ahlenius (2010: 2), commenting on UN reform, observes that 'disintegrated and ill-thought through "reforms" are launched without adequate analysis and with a lack of understanding'. She adds that this 'translates into a weakening of the overall position of the United Nations, and a reduced relevance of the organization'. Amongst some of the negative consequences of this drift by the organisation is its reduced 'capacity to protect the civilians in conflict and distress' (Ahlenius 2010: 2).

The net result of the proposed convoluted system of compromises as far as UN reform is concerned has not addressed, and probably will not address, the deep and structural crisis of international legitimacy of the decision-making structures of the universal body. Ahlenius (2010: 1) also concludes that, as far as UN reform is concerned, 'there is no transparency, there is a lack of accountability'; she is emphatic that she does 'not see any signs of reform in the organization'. What this suggests is that notions of participatory democracy need to be relocated at a global level (Archibugi 2000).

Asia and the emergence of a parallel 'international system'

As if on cue and to attest to the loss of credibility and legitimacy of the UN system, China is leading the creation of a new, parallel 'international system' focused on its own interests. The world is transforming and a new balance of economic power is emerging. China is now the second-largest economy in the world, with the largest foreign currency reserves, and is intent on no longer abiding by the strictures of the decrepit and decaying international system. For example, in a bold move to remake the global financial order, the establishment of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will now rival the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which the US Congress has stubbornly refused to allow to be reformed. China has seen this prevarication of the US government as a statement of intent to continue to shut it out of the global economic order. Interestingly, the UK, a staunch US ally, has agreed to sign up as a founding member of the AIIB, suggesting that it is adopting a future-oriented strategy that recognises that current structures, such as the IMF and World Bank, will continue to decline in prominence.

In terms of geopolitics, the US government, its counterparts and rivals in the P5 have no intention of remaking the UNSC to reflect the global shift in terms of the emergence of new powers – notably the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Successive US administrations, and other P5 members, have paid lip service to the arguments put forward by countries such as India, which is the largest democracy in the world with over one billion citizens. Asia, Latin America and Africa are also demanding that their influence on the global stage be respected.

If the geopolitical order has corroded, the only option is to dismantle it and reconstruct it anew. The platitudes about UNSC reform, which have been dangled like juicy slices of raw beef at the salivating canine middle-power countries, have been exposed for what they are: empty promises. Like an excited teenager all dolled up to go out on a date, the middle-power countries have realised that the P5 will not

turn up at the party, or take part in the much-anticipated jovial celebration that was to be the 'reform' of the UNSC. Still reeling from the rejection, middle-power countries have not been able to gather their collective wits and strategise for an alternative way forward. Consequently, an imaginative turn is required to transform and create a new reality in the geopolitical landscape.

Global disorder will persist, unless ...

The era of global disorder will persist, due to the fact that a radical shift in thinking does not, and cannot, happen overnight. This is particularly apt when we are referring to international relations in which the parochial prejudices and biases of stateswomen and statesmen persist as the basis upon which to inform decision-making. This situation will not change until the attitudes are transformed through a programme of 'unlearning' the self-defeating and self-destructive world views premised on aggression, dominion and control. The contestation and jostling for global supremacy will continue in this intervening period.

If anything, the powerful countries have acquired a voracious appetite for preventing any contestation to their global hegemonic power from any usurpers and pretenders to the global throne. It has got to a point at which they are already directly engaging each other – for example, China's ongoing confrontation with the US over the issue of sovereignty of the South China Sea, and NATO's campaign to encircle Russia, evident in the most recent invitation to Montenegro to join the military alliance.

The case for remaking the global order

The only goal that the perpetual and endless discussion of UN reform achieves is the perpetuation and entrenchment of the historical entitlement of the dominant powers at the geopolitical level. Maintaining the entrenched privilege of the countries that designed the world system, through the founding of the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions, compromises the credibility of the reform agenda. Consequently, in terms of advancing the interests of humanity in effective international order, the UNSC has become a mangled relic of a bygone era. The Charter of San Francisco has, in fact, run its course – even ardent supporters of the UN recognise that the institution can no longer serve a 21st century global body politic. We are in an era that is reminiscent of the twilight years prior to the demise of the League of Nations, when the body was overrun by the excesses of the emergent totalitarian regimes in Germany and Japan (Walters 1952). It is evident that the world is at a tipping point and the remaking of global order is long overdue. It is necessary to re-think and remake the global order. A radical process of change is urgent and summoning us to a new way of being in this world.

In whose image will the world be remade?

If we accept the case that the world needs to be remade, then the next question becomes: in whose image will it be remade? Self-evidently, the only system that is likely to survive and ensure human survival at the same time is one that receives broad-based support and buy-in. Consequently, the primary challenge

is one of deepening global democracy; central to this task is how to combine structures of international authority with mechanisms of citizen representation and participation. This is a system that the West would be familiar with because it constantly proselytises to the rest of the world about the importance of democracy, and even goes so far as to try to impose it by military force such as in Iraq and Syria.

Africa and the legacy of global exclusion

In this noble quest to redesign the international system, the historical exclusion of a majority of the world in designing and upholding global order also needs to be redressed. Historically, Africa, as some other parts of the world, has been excluded from the design and construction of global order. Given its historical exclusion, exploitation and oppression, it is vital in terms of global justice for Africa to assert its right to shape the future global order.

Currently, the reality of negotiation processes in the UNSC perpetuates and reproduces this paternalistic exclusion of the African continent. More than 60 per cent of the issues discussed by the UNSC are focused on Africa, yet the continent does not have any representation among the P5. Given the fact that the P5 can veto all manner of decisions before the Council, it is a travesty of justice at its most basic level that African countries can only participate in key deliberations and decision-making processes as individual non-permanent members of the Council. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that African non-permanent members of the Council will, in fact, articulate and advance positions that are in the interests of African citizens and vulnerable communities in the countries that they do represent. UNSC negotiation and decision-making processes are, in effect, the highest manifestation of unfairness in the international system. If achieving fairness in negotiations among states is the preferred route to achieving global legitimation, then a fundamental transformation of the UNSC and the elimination of the veto provision is a prerequisite action. The P5 members are among the beneficiaries of the status quo within the international system, reproducing, in effect, a form of diplomatic apartheid. Given the fact that the asymmetrical distribution of global political, economic and military power has remained relatively unchanged since the end of the Cold War, the potential beneficiaries of global democratic transformation would, in effect, be the societies in the so-called developing regions of the world – Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Pan-African efforts to reform the UNSC

Africa has tried to voice its concern about the need for a change within the existing UN system. Specifically, in March 2005, the AU issued a declaration known as The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus (African Union 2005), which was a statement in response to the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was issued in December 2004. The AU issued a position on UN reform and, in particular, on the reform of the UNSC by noting that 'in 1945, when the UN was formed, most of Africa was not represented and that in 1963, when the first reform took place, Africa was represented but was not in a particularly strong position' (African Union 2005: 9). The AU goes on to state that 'Africa is now in a position to influence the proposed UN

reforms by maintaining her unity of purpose'; furthermore, it notes that 'Africa's goal is to be fully represented in all the decision-making organs of the UN, particularly in the Security Council' (African Union 2005: 9). The Common African Position enumerates what 'full representation' of Africa in the UNSC means by demanding 'not less than two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership including the right to veto' and 'five non-permanent seats' (African Union 2005: 9).

On 27 May 2010, the first-ever negotiating text on Security Council reform was issued by the Chair of Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform, Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan. In this document, the AU position articulated by Sierra Leone, which is a current non-permanent member of the UNSC, retained the original position by stating that 'Africa seeks the abolition of the veto, but alternatively, so long as it continues to exist, its extension to all new permanent members in the Council as a matter of common justice'. As noted above, the virtual impossibility of eliminating the veto provision from P5 members (due to their combined coercive power to subvert any such initiative) in the short to medium term weakens the argument that achieving fairness in negotiations among states is a potential route to global legitimisation.

African perspectives on the remaking of global order

This attempt by the African continent to propose reform of the UNSC through the Ezulwini Consensus has largely been rebuffed by the self-involved and self-interested powerful members of the UNSC, notably the P5. Consequently, it is time for Africa to participate directly in the dismantling of the current global system and replace it with a more inclusive system of global democracy. It is incumbent upon our citizens, and the leaders that they have chosen, not to wait for ideas to come from elsewhere, because they will not come in a manner that will be favourable to the collective, but only to the self-interested minority elite.

Humanity is increasingly bombarded by a certain way of thinking, through media manipulation, which prevents us from questioning the existing order. The first step is to pierce the veil of this deception and see the world as it is. Africa as a continent has to put forward its own proposals for remaking the global order.

Sentiments emerging from the African Union Annual Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2016 were that African countries should 'pull out' of the UN system. This might be a necessary stepping stone towards dismantling the current system and replacing it with a system that deepens global democracy. While the prospect of exiting the dysfunctional UN system is appealing, there are a number of challenges that have to be taken into account. For example, it is impractical to withdraw from engaging with the international system, particularly if you have to continue engaging and interacting with other actors around the world. Consequently, Africa needs to regroup and rethink its strategy for remaking the world system.

Enhancing Africa's global agency

In order for Africa to achieve this objective, it will need to cleanse itself of, and extract itself from, any internalised sense of inferiority. This can only be achieved

by decolonising the African mind from the mental slavery that is a persistent feature of the postcolonial societies across the continent. African countries working in tandem can become a powerful force in international relations. The African project of continental unity is still a work in progress, but it will contribute towards enhancing the agency of the continent. The fact that the continent is still a work in progress does not mean that it has nothing to offer the world. Africa can offer insights from, and draw upon, its own historical experiences and continental struggles. African civic actors and the wider society can also lead the debate on a broad range of ideas, proposals and recommendations.

Africa must assert its right to contribute to remaking the world from the set of principles that have animated its existence in the past century. Consequently, these principles of freedom, solidarity, justice and reconciliation, of which Africa is a proponent, should inform the remaking of the world in way that strives to balance international authority with citizen participation (Murithi 2007).

Africans as freedom seekers

Africans are freedom seekers, evident in their historical quest to liberate their continent. Pan-African freedom seeking is also embodied in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles that were led by actors across the continent. The quest for ultimate freedom has continued into the 21st century, due to the persistence of economic control driven by compromised global institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank. We have not succeeded in spreading freedom to every corner of the African continent, so the work continues. In addition, there is much work to be done to advance economic empowerment, which is the ultimate indicator of a continent of people who can determine their self-development and enhance their livelihoods. This notion of human freedom should inform the agenda to reform the global order.

Africans as global solidarity promoters

Pan-African solidarity is evident in the support that countries under the yoke of colonialism and apartheid received from their fellow African states and societies. Today, pan-Africanism is evident in the support that countries across the continent provide to those wracked by conflict and crisis. Consequently, there is a strong argument for pan-African solidarity and pan-Africanism. However, there is still much more to be done to translate pan-African solidarity into interventions that will consolidate and entrench democratic governance across the continent. However, this spirit of solidarity should, and can be, translated into ideas to frame participatory global governance.

Africans as justice promoters

Africans have struggled for a more just world and more equitable global order. As targets of historical injustice, Africans continue to lead on the promotion of justice understood in this instance as fairness, equality, accountability and redress for harm done in the past. In order to redress this historical injustice, the idea of a just system should animate the redesign of a new global order.

Africans as reconciliactors

Africans have sought to promote reconciliation between the various groups, societies and communities around the world, epitomised by the work of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. This principled position is evident in the posture that was adopted by African governments and societies when the external colonisers left the continent. There was no rush to seek revenge and vengeance against colonisers for the brutal and dehumanising system. In fact, in some countries the settler communities the political narrative of reconciliation was deployed to frame the future relationship between the settlers and the natives. This approach is now being contested because there is a sense that reconciliation was not accompanied by justice and a genuine attempt by the colonial powers to redress the human rights violations that they perpetuated against the countries they dominated. Nevertheless, this illustrates that Africans are also reconciliactors, or agents of change premised on healing the deep divisions between groups and societies. The idea of global reconciliation also has to inform the attempts to redesign the international system.

Proposals for radical global transformation informed by a renewal of principles

On 14 July 2010, Inga-Britt Ahlenius, the outgoing United Nations Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) issued a scathing End of Assignment Report in which she stated that the UN was 'in a process of decline and reduced relevance'. Ahlenius was even more damning when she concluded that the UN seems 'to be seen less and less as a relevant partner in the resolution of world problems … this is as sad as it is serious' (2010: 3). The continuing relevance of the UN is a lament that is often heard within the corridors of the organisation. Yet the institution remains a forum of last resort when a particular global crisis threatens to overwhelm the international system.

Criticisms of the organisation rarely come from within its ranks because the staff, for the most part, are constrained from openly articulating their views. It is therefore almost impossible to corroborate whether the views held by Ahlenius are widespread within the organisation, or whether they are the vitriolic ramblings of a disgruntled and discredited former staff member.

The following section will draw upon the principles of human freedom, solidarity, justice and reconciliation to propose a radical transformation of the UN into a World Federation of Nations (WFN). It will briefly discuss the dissenting opinion on the prospects for, and possibility of, a radical remake of the global order. It will conclude by identifying the practical steps that would be necessary to initiate a radical overhaul of the international system in a manner that could lay the foundation for global democracy.

The World Federation of Nations: Towards a new global democratic architecture

The primary challenge of deepening global democracy is how to combine structures of international authority with mechanisms of citizen representation and participation. This paper has sought to establish the principle that radical transformation is required to

achieve global democracy. UN reform will not significantly alter power imbalances; nor will it empower the citizens of the world to assert their right to hold global institutions accountable for their actions. Furthermore, radical transformation is also necessary to empower world citizens, through their own agency, to be in a position actively to reduce the socio-economic inequalities that plague the majority of humanity. The UN has become an anachronistic caterpillar that has ossified and is now ready to shed its depleted edifice through a process of metamorphosis that will allow a new global body politic to emerge.

World Federation of Nations

Based on ideas that have been promoted by the World Federalist Movement for close to half a century, perhaps the time has come to think about creating a new structure for global governance. This would require reactivating humanity's political imagination. It is evident that a new global democratic architecture (GDA) is required. The GDA would be premised on a fundamental shift away from privileging the nation state in global affairs. The World Federation of Nations would feasibly include the following organs: a World Parliament, a Council of Supra-nations, an Assembly of Nation States, a Committee of Sub-national Groups, a Global Forum of NGOs, and a Global Committee of Unions and Transnational Corporations. Any progress towards practical implementation will, of course, require much more deliberation about the purpose and functions of the various organs. The objective of setting out these organs here in this fashion is to provide food for thought and stimulate deeper reflection.

WFN Council of Supra-nations

This council would be a grouping of existing and emerging supra-national entities like the European Union and the African Union. It would have a deliberative and decision-making capacity, as well as the ability to sanction other actors for failing to uphold the implementation of international law developed by the Assembly of Nation States, the Committee of Sub-national Groups and the WFN Parliament.

WFN Assembly of Nation States

This grouping of nation states would have the ability to continue to develop international law on any issues.

WFN Committee of Sub-national Groups

This grouping of sub-national groups would be representative and involved in democratic oversight on international legislation being developed by the Assembly of Nation States. It would also be empowered to petition the WFN Parliament, the WFN Assembly of Nation States, or the WFN Council of Supra-nations. The criteria for being considered a sub-national group would have to be determined through a global consultation process. The modalities for representation would need to be determined through global consultation.

WFN World Parliament

As a practical objective, the idea of a world parliament or some other democratically constituted global assembly is slowly gaining currency (Monbiot 2003). A WFN

World Parliament would be able to formulate international law on a par with the Assembly of Nation States. In addition, it would have an oversight function of the implementation or non-implementation of international law and the ability to sanction non-compliant actors. The role of the World Parliament would be to make global decision-making and the implementation of laws a more inclusive process. Members of the World Parliament would be elected through universal suffrage. The World Parliament would therefore require states to be more accountable to a global polity with regard to their actions and allocation of resources. This is one basis upon which humanity as a whole can begin to prevent unilateralism from undermining collective and collaborative problem-solving. In terms of the potential routes to a global assembly, Andrew Strauss (2005: 1) suggests 'a popularly elected representative body that will begin very modestly with largely advisory powers, and that following the trajectory of the European Parliament, would only gain powers slowly over time' (see below for a detailed discussion of the practical steps to such an evolution).

The normative proposal for a new global democratic architecture (GDA) would have to be elaborated through a comprehensive and widespread process of global consultation.

Transformation of UN ECOSOC

WFN Global Forum of NGOs and Civil Society Groups

This group would be an institutional framework for the representation for non-governmental organisations, civil society groups, ecumenical groups and other associations. It would have a largely consultative function with regards to the other branches of the GDA. The standards and criteria for membership, codes of conduct and ethics would be established through a global consultation process.

WFN Global Committee of Unions and Transnational Corporations

This group would be an institutional framework for the incorporation of unions and transnational corporations as the inauguration of formal global union citizenship and global corporate citizenship. It would have a largely consultative function with regards to the other branches of the GDA. The standards and criteria for membership, codes of conduct and ethics would be established through a global consultation process.

All these institutions would fall under the umbrella of a World Federation of Nations (WFN). Other programmes and specialised agencies, autonomous organisations, committees, and ad hoc and related bodies within the current United Nations system would also need to adjust their statues and mandates in order to correspond to the transformed WFN system.

The pathway to the remaking of global order: Practical steps to the WFN through a UN Charter Review Conference

The founders of the UN recognised that the moment would arrive when it became imperative to transform the organisation, and included a practical mechanism to review the body's Charter. Specifically, Article 109 of the UN Charter provides for a

'General Conference of the Members for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter'. Article 109 of the UN Charter cannot be vetoed by the P5 members of the UNSC, which has, in the past, hampered, deliberately sabotaged and deployed subterfuge among their client states to prevent any attempts to 'reform' the UNSC.

This Charter Review Conference could be convened at a specific date and place if it is approved by 'a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote of any nine members of the Security Council' (United Nations Charter, Article 109: 1). Therefore, in practice, there are no major obstacles to convening a Charter Review Conference, apart from securing the necessary percentages described above. In addition, the decision-making process at such a Charter Review Conference would be relatively democratic in the sense that 'each member of the United Nations shall have one vote in the conference'.

This Charter Review Conference could be initiated through a process of mobilising the will of two-thirds of the General Assembly and nine members of the Security Council. The latter provision means that the P5 members cannot veto any proposed UN Charter Review Conference. Such a Charter Review Conference could adopt a recommendation to alter the UN Charter substantially and introduce completely new provisions, including a change in the name of the institution to, for example, the World Federation of Nations. The adoption of these new recommendations could be on the basis of a two-thirds vote of the conference and each member of the UN would have one vote.

The major challenge will arise when it comes to ratifying any revised or new charter. Article 109 further stipulates that any alteration of the UN Charter can only take effect 'when ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two thirds of the members of the United Nations including all the permanent members of the Security Council'.

In essence, if a UN Charter Review Conference makes recommendations, then these have to be further ratified by the governments of member states, including all P5 members. Therefore, the final ratification of a new Charter could potentially be held hostage by a veto from any of the P5, in what is in effect an undemocratic provision inserted by the founders of the UN undoubtedly to serve their own interests of ensuring that any provisions meet with their approval.

There are precedents for Charter Review processes leading to the establishment of new international organisations, notably the Organization of African Unity's transformation into the African Union, initiated by a meeting of Heads of State and Government in 1999.

Therefore, a UN Charter Review Conference could lead to the formation of the WFN through broad-based and inclusive consultations that include governments, civil society, business, trade unions and academics. Despite the potential veto of P5 members at the ratification stage, the General Assembly could, nevertheless, take the initiative and convene a UN Charter Review Conference. The recommendations adopted at a UN Charter Review Conference would be imbued by a degree of moral legitimacy; therefore, any efforts to sabotage the full adoption of such recommendations by the P5 members would further expose the injustice entrenched in the international system.

In the absence of the political will within the UN to convene a Charter Review Conference, an alternative strategy would be to establish the WFN through the convening of a new and separate treaty, which could be approved and adopted by 'whichever internationally progressive countries were willing to be pioneers' (Strauss 2005: 9). With reference to a global parliamentary assembly or, as this

proposal suggests, the WFN Parliament, 'even twenty to thirty economically and geographically diverse countries would be enough to found the parliament' and 'the treaty agreed to by these countries would establish the legal structure for elections to be held within their territories including a voting system and electoral districts' (Strauss 2005: 9). There is no reason why these pioneering countries would have to give up their membership of the UN whilst forming the World Federation of Nations, since almost all countries belong to more than one international organisation simultaneously. In fact, there could be an advantage for the pioneer members of the WFN to retain their membership of the UN and actively use their positions to advocate for the new GDA and convince an ever-increasing number of countries to join them in the new formation.

The constitution of the WFN could be framed in such a way that any country could join the formation, as long as it is willing to meet its obligations under the WFN treaty. If the WFN treaty begins to gain momentum, then 'other less proactive countries would have an incentive to take part rather than be sidelined in the creation of an important new international organization' (Strauss 2005: 10). When membership of the WFN reaches an optimal number of countries, then one could begin to see the gradual withering away of the relevance of the UN until it undergoes the same demise as the League of Nations. In fact, the UN itself was established by a pioneering group of countries, so it has already provided an example of how to achieve the establishment of the WFN successfully.

In terms of the way forward, what is required is for a group of progressive states to begin drafting a General Assembly resolution to put the UN Charter Review Conference on the agenda and also, in parallel, to begin to finance the drafting the treaty and constitutional framework of the WFN.

Interrogating the (im)possibility of change

It would be naïve to think that the beneficiaries of the current system will allow change to happen simply because the African continent demands it. Consequently, this radical transformation will not happen anytime soon. Instead, Africa will have to utilise a strategy of disruption, to undermine global systems and institutions that continue to perpetuate its subordinate status and historical injustice. Africa will also need to continue leading in the design and creation of new global institutions, and withdraw from international institutions that are dominated by the global geopolitical power brokers.

Africa has already attempted this with the Ezulwini Consensus, but it was comprehensively rebuffed; a decade after the initial Ezulwini Consensus initiative, the global system of governance and the UN Security Council remains intact and unaffected – as well as dysfunctional in terms of addressing contemporary security threats. The point is not that the UN is not doing good work in some places – rather, it is that the next version of the UN should be able to achieve even more for the war-affected, refugees and downtrodden. In addition, in a new system of global democracy, it should have its own predictable source of funding sourced, for example, from taxing financial capital flows or issuing a levy on imports, which the African Union has recently adopted as a proposed policy for funding its own operations. Ultimately, the redesign of the global order is, in effect, about advancing the notion of our common humanity.

Conclusion

The current global order is at breaking point. The type of thinking that got us to this planetary crisis point is not the type of thinking that will get us out of this conundrum. By extension, this erroneous thinking, informed by political realism, is not the kind of thinking that will get us out of this situation of global insecurity in which we find ourselves.

The UN system and its Security Council have abdicated from undertaking this fundamental task, which is key to human survival. The excesses of the P5 members of the UNSC have pushed the world over the precipice; the world is in an extended descent into the abyss of cyclical and never-ending violence. While there are those who might relish and benefit from this state of affairs, the prognosis suggests that humanity will not survive if the endemic crises it faces around the world cannot be addressed by a paralytic and decrepit UN system.

The powerful members of the UN have demonstrated their ability to ratchet up the geopolitical pressure to achieve their own interests. They have also demonstrated their willingness to utilise the UN as a prophylactic to achieve their nefarious ends. This is one situation in which the UN Charter came under direct threat from the dogmatic interests of the P5 members of the UNSC.

The illegal Iraq invasion by the US and UK was the clearest demonstration of this predilection to perverting the international rule of law. The US and UK amassed a coalition of the coerced and mounted their invasion in direct contravention of the UN Charter, specifically Article 39 and its injunction against interstate aggression. This event was nevertheless a notable nail in the coffin of the UN Charter and a clear illustration of the undemocratic character of the international system.

Similarly, the ongoing bombing raids in Syria by the P4 members of the P5 of the UNSC, which were launched without a Security Council resolution, are further evidence of the corrupt nature of an international system that purports to be the purveyor of the maintenance of peace and security.

The UN, which was created to address the problems of the world in 1945, is no longer fit for purpose in the 21st century. The institution tasked with global security and maintaining the international rule of law is dysfunctional. As stipulated in the UN Charter, far from establishing 'the conditions under which justice and the respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained' (UN Charter, Preamble), the P5 members are, in fact, undermining this historical mission. The point is that the kind of thinking that got us into this conundrum is not the same type of thinking that will get us out of the current global predicament. The world has come to this state of affairs, due to erroneous decision-making and missed opportunities by the global power elite who have, until now, dictated the structure of the international system. This erroneous decision-making is based on ill-thought-out strategies predicated on a misplaced aggressive drive for dominion and control to achieve hegemonic self-interest. Paradoxically, instead of achieving the desired objectives of dominion, the global power elite are rapidly losing control of the international system, and are fomenting attitudes around the world that are exacerbating global insecurity.

The challenge is how to extract the world from this paradoxical situation, which could trigger events that could fuel and inflame an escalation of global confrontation and ultimately lead to chaos and catastrophe. The issue is whether the world can avert this precipitous decline and find creative ways to restore global order.

There is, therefore, a need for global rules and standards to restrain the economic and political excesses that are currently undermining the fabric of societies

worldwide. If one speaks of providing more opportunities for the global citizenry to participate in global affairs, then it is logical that people should be represented at the global level by some kind of world people's assembly. The peace marches that took place in April and May 2003 around the world brought an estimated ten million people out into the streets to air their views, but this did not really have a major impact on transforming the policies that were ultimately adopted. There was a revolution in global consciousness, but not a parallel echoing of this transformation at the level of the institutions of global governance. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the next time an issue of global concern is voiced by the peoples of the world, there will be an institution able to articulate these concerns and translate them into policy decisions that can contribute towards improving the democratic transparency and accountability of the global decision-making and implementation process.

It is unlikely that tinkering with the edges, in the form of so-called UN reform, will generate institutional models that lead to a deepening of global democracy. Yet the global challenges across regions and within states continue to mount without an adequate forum for those most affected by these challenges to voice their concerns. Consequently, the transition to global democracy cannot be left to its own devices. The current global system is defined by the selective respect for international law and a self-evident democratic deficit. If the status quo is permitted to persist, this model of elite global governance – manifest, for example, through the P5 members of the UNSC – will not reform itself, but merely replicate and reproduce existing forms of exclusivity by co-opting a few more members. The increase in issues of common concern to world citizens at the global level justifies the formation of new arenas for democratic decision-making.

African experiences can influence the formation of a new global order. Specifically, drawing upon pan-African experiences in the quest for human freedom, solidarity, justice and reconciliation, the continent can infuse these notions into the reconfiguration of the global order. A new GDA would be premised on the vertical disaggregation of the power of nation states to a supra-national grouping of regions and downwards to sub-national communal formations. This paper proposed that a sufficient case can be made for the establishment of a World Federation of Nations to embody this new GDA. A UN Charter Review Conference could launch such a process; alternatively, the WFN could be established by a separate treaty.

This paper has sought to establish the principle that radical transformation is required to achieve global democracy. UN reform will not significantly alter power imbalances; nor will it empower the citizens of the world to assert their right to hold global institutions accountable for their actions. Furthermore, radical transformation is also necessary to empower world citizens, through their own agency, to be in a position actively to define a future organisation that will address their interests in terms of reducing the socio-economic inequalities that plague the majority of humanity. The UN has become an anachronistic caterpillar that has ossified and is now ready to shed its depleted edifice through a process of metamorphosis which will allow a new geopolitical configuration to emerge and strive to re-orient the planet towards global order. In the interregnum leading to this radical transformation, there will be paradoxes, fissures and discontinuities, but these will be necessary in order to enable and facilitate the emergence of a new global order. In this historical mission, humanity should be guided by the wisdom of the distinguished pan-Africanist and first president of a democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela, who advised that: *'It always seems impossible until it is done'.*

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