

“In this outstanding volume, López-Claros, Dahl, and Groff document the existential challenges facing our global institutions, from environmental decline and the failure of existing international security mechanisms to mass population flows and the crisis of sovereignty and civil society engagement. The resulting landscape might seem hopeless and overwhelming, if not for the authors’ innovative, wide-ranging, and thought-provoking recommendations for reshaping existing institutions to expand their relevance and effectiveness. Their ideas for updating our seven-decades-old structures include creating an international peace force, ratifying a United Nations Bill of Rights, reforming the UN Security Council and International Monetary Fund, establishing a civil society chamber, and beyond. Readers may not endorse every one of their suggestions, but they are invited into a fascinating game of ‘what if?’ and ‘why not?’ It is an invitation that should not be missed.”

Ambassador Donald Steinberg, Board member, Center for Strategic and International Studies

“The current UN-based world system of governance, largely formulated in the mid-20th century after the Second World War, is not up to dealing satisfactorily with 21st-century problems. But it is what we have. The authors of this book suggest radical, even breathtaking, reforms to enable global governance to cope with current and prospective global problems, from keeping and enforcing peace, to inhibiting – if not preventing – financial crises, to protecting residents of all countries from governmental abuse, to mitigating and adapting to climate change. These are desirable objectives, not yet feasible in a world of nationalistic states devoted to narrow national sovereignty. But political leaders eventually die, and the authors take comfort that today’s youth, tomorrow’s leaders, are much more conscious of today’s global problems. This book provides an illuminating and provoking starting point for expanding our institutional ability to solve them.”

Richard N. Cooper, Maurits C. Boas Professor of International Economics, Harvard University

“López-Claros, Dahl, and Groff propose radical reforms to the charter that authorizes and rules the United Nations, and other methods of improving the current muddled state of global governance. Their case is persuasive. This book’s trenchant analysis of what ails the running of the globe should be read by policymakers everywhere, and certainly by those many citizens who concern themselves with fostering a better and more functional world. Change comes slowly, but this book is a prodding catalyst.”

Robert I. Rotberg, Harvard Kennedy School, author of On Governance

“The bold idealism championed by López-Claros, Dahl, and Groff is just what the planet needs, with not a moment to lose if we are to halt and reverse the trajectory of imminent disaster on which we have set ourselves. As a former Ambassador to the United Nations with first-hand experience on the UN Security Council, I applaud the vision laid out for transformational change grounded in past institutional experience.”

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“*Global Governance* is a book of exceptional breadth and vision, written for an unprecedented period in the historical evolution of humankind. Defying the cynicism and myopia that often define the political culture of our times, it dares to state the obvious truth that global interdependence is an inescapable reality, and that, far from naïve idealism, building effective global institutions in the 21st century is a matter of survival for our species.”

*Payam Akhavan, Professor of International Law, McGill University,
Montreal, Canada*

“This volume makes a powerful call for action to transform the international institutions that govern human affairs. Grounded in rigorous historical exploration, it offers a vision for collective courage to change what we can and reimagine what we consider outmoded and inadequate. This is the blueprint for a new global architecture.”

*Maria Ivanova, Associate Professor of Global Governance and
Director of Center for Governance and Sustainability,
University of Massachusetts–Boston*

“This pathbreaking work provides important insights for practitioners and scholars struggling to understand the economic, political, and scientific forces roiling the world. As humanity seeks ways, well beyond the traditional controls available to individual nation states, to manage problems which pose enormous risks as well as rich opportunities, this book points in promising directions.”

*Dan Sarooshi QC, Professor of Public International Law,
Faculty of Law and the Queen’s College, University of Oxford;
and Essex Court Chambers, London*

“From the vantage of where we sit today, it is difficult to recall – or even imagine – the confidence in global institutions that characterized the last decade of the 20th century. Consider a few of the highlights: the entry into force of NAFTA in 1994 and creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995; establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1993 and 1994; and the Maastricht Treaty’s significant advances in the institutionalization of Europe in 1992. Even the U.N. Security Council was somehow on the rise, with the coalition it empowered to undertake the first Gulf War in 1990. In reading this important new work on global governance, one cannot help but recall those heady days. Rather than mere nostalgia, however, what López-Claros, Dahl and Groff offer is a firm normative account of the wisdom of that era – and of the perhaps even more pressing need for such institutionalist imperatives today. Equally important, they offer a thoughtful blueprint for a re-invigorated international order and suggest why that ambitious vision – far from mere pious hope – is well within reach.”

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Century
Cambridge University Press
Augusto Lopez-Claros, Arthur L. Dahl, Maia Groff
978-1-108-47696-0 Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st
Frontmatter

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Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century

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Global Governance Forum

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108476966

DOI: 10.1017/9781108569293

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781108569293

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Dahl, Arthur L., author. | Groff, Maja, author. | López-Claros, Augusto, author.

TITLE: Global governance and the emergence of global institutions for the 21st century / Arthur L. Dahl, International Environmental Forum, Maja Groff, The Hague Conference, Augusto Lopez-Claros, Georgetown University, Washington DC.

DESCRIPTION: United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, [2020] |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019040768 (print) | LCCN 2019040769 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108476966 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108701808 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108569293 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: International cooperation.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC JZ1308 .D34 2020 (print) | LCC JZ1308 (ebook) | DDC 341.7–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019040768>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019040769>

ISBN 978-1-108-47696-6 Hardback

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Preface

The world today is facing unprecedented challenges of governance far beyond what the United Nations (UN), established 75 years ago, was designed to face. The grave effects of global climate change are already manifesting themselves, requiring rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society to arrest catastrophic and probably irreversible consequences. Science has uncovered the frightening and rapid collapse in global biodiversity, threatening ecosystems across the planet that maintain the correct functioning of the biosphere, essential to human life. But there is more; there are other global catastrophic risks. There is today a diminished faith in our political leaders and the institutions that underpin our systems of governance; public disillusionment with hyper-partisan politics and willingness to believe populist promises; disturbingly high levels of income inequality; still much too persistent and widespread human rights violations; and the spread of corruption, coinciding with the rise of autocratic leaders, often intent on awakening the voices of nationalisms which were so destructive during past centuries. The recent rejection by some nations of the benefits of multilateralism and international cooperation, which have been at the center of the postwar global order, has heightened the risks of fundamental instabilities that could precipitate a range of major crises, disregarding the lessons of the past.

The forces of globalization have been undermining traditional institutions of government – including the state itself – and creating alternative centers of power. New forms of knowledge and networking, of information flows and manipulation, of finance and commerce, of digitization and artificial intelligence, are accelerating rates of change, undermining the traditional roles of various institutions, forms of organization, inherited assumptions and cultural patterns no longer adapted to the requirements of an emerging world society catalyzed by science and technology. The pushback of fundamentalist and reactionary movements, inter-state attempts to destabilize competitors in a struggle for domination, and the increasing social

fractures exploited for political ends are putting societies under strain and creating conditions for greater anarchy and chaos.

There are, however, also forces of integration and global progress at work, with positive examples of vibrant international civil society action, unprecedented cultural and scholarly exchange, economic innovation, technological solutions, and movements dedicated to human transformation and well-being; but they may not yet be sufficiently strong to overcome the current forces of dissolution and breakdown that are accelerating. To address the growing planetary climate crisis, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), convened under the auspices of the UN, has warned that only a decade remains to contain the damage caused by present energy systems and land use. The UN, in its 2030 Agenda, has called for a fundamental transformation in society, a paradigm shift away from the present trajectory, but government response has been lukewarm, with little political will for the efforts that are necessary. Humanity seems to be in a state of collective denial.

Our world is like a bus packed with passengers hurtling along a winding mountain road, with several people fighting for the driver's seat and no one really in control. Across the economic, social, and environmental domains, there are increasing predictions of severe crises ahead, some of them possibly taking the world into uncharted territory, with possibly irreversible effects. The resulting fear and frustration are driving the rise of populist movements and the rejection of multilateralism, a turning inward when the need is to reach out to each other and collaborate in finding solutions to our problems.

The last time that there was a serious debate about the kind of global order that needed to be created to ensure sustainable and just international peace and security, and to create a basis for universal human prosperity, was when the United States entered World War II and President Roosevelt called for the creation of the United Nations in early 1942. In early discussions, proposals for the UN Charter imagined an international entity informed by sound federalist principles, including the creation of a legislative body with some powers to enact laws that would be binding on member states. But the need to ensure the support of the Soviet Union and US Senate approval of the UN Charter resulted in a considerably weakened and structurally flawed organization.

In the late 1950s, Grenville Clark and Louis Sohn, in their groundbreaking *World Peace through World Law*, offered a comprehensive range of proposals to address the built-in flaws of the UN system. But, while much admired in many policymaking circles, their ideas did not trigger the reforms they suggested. By then the world was in the midst of the Cold War and entered a decades-long process of historically unprecedented arms build-up by the major powers, with multiple conflicts across the planet, great losses in human life and delayed economic and social development as resources were diverted to this arms race. Sixty years later, it is becoming increasingly evident that our current UN-based order, already known in 1945 to be inadequate, cannot cope with an increasingly complex and interconnected world and

does not yet possess the mechanisms that are vital to address a multitude of shared planetary problems.

We think that the time is ripe to reexamine the architecture of our current institutions of global governance, not as an academic exercise but to assist in catalyzing processes of change that lead to concrete progress. Failure to strengthen the international order now will increase the likelihood of societies around the world being overwhelmed by global crises with devastating worldwide consequences. The survivors may be forced to rebuild a global institutional framework after a third world war or nuclear exchange, the collapse of the global economy, a pandemic wiping out a significant part of the world's population, or extreme climate change which is already beginning to produce mass migrations, any of which would overwhelm existing institutions.

Each of us, from our different economic, legal, and environmental perspectives, our shared common values and decades of experience within the international system, has felt the need to make the intellectual effort to overcome the blockage of diminished expectations for global governance, and to map possible ways forward. This book is the result. Too many “realists” say that change is not possible, but the other reality is the awareness of the multiple crises ahead, if not already upsetting the planet's equilibrium, and of the human suffering that will inevitably result.

Our cautious optimism to engage in such discussions now, in the year of the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter, is grounded on several, mutually reinforcing factors.

First, the current system has few credible defenders who are persuasively arguing that the status quo is the optimal strategy, and that human society can just “muddle through” for the next several decades without meaningfully addressing some of the risks that cast a shadow over its collective future.

Second, the world is immeasurably more integrated today than half a century ago, and the costs of non-cooperation are also much higher. A war between global powers, in the age of nuclear weapons, would be unimaginably more catastrophic in its consequences than anything humanity has witnessed in the past. The 2008 financial crisis started in one country but rapidly spilled over and became global, deeply destabilizing, and costly.

Third, civil society and the business community are empowered today in a way that was not the case in the 1950s. Many major successful initiatives in the area of international cooperation in the past several decades – from the creation of the International Criminal Court to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – could not have been undertaken without the involvement of stakeholders beyond government. These relatively new forces of transnational civil society are showing increasingly sophisticated and effective methods to catalyze and shape significant changes in the architecture of global governance.

Fourth, science and communications technologies and the spread of education have made it much easier to mobilize public opinion. There is much greater

awareness, globally, of the problems facing the world and the risks that they carry. At the same time, the intellectual and professional classes in various fields, whether in international law, business, economics or the international civil service generally, are increasingly frustrated with institutions as they stand, creating much latent capacity for engagement in global governance reform. There is great potential for “bottom-up” and “top-down” synergies among communities of interest who are deeply concerned about global catastrophic risks and current institutional limitations.

We hope this book will start a discussion on the reforms that are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the global institutional architecture in order to respond proactively to the risks that threaten the future of humanity. Of course, we do not have all the answers, but we want to show that reasonable answers are possible and that reforming global governance is not utopian, but a necessity for our survival. Rather than tinkering at the margins of the present UN system, we propose a comprehensive set of reforms that would correct its fundamental flaws, empowering institutions of global governance to address the multiple problems and catastrophic risks we face and enabling us all to respond constructively to reduce or eliminate them. We envision a system with justice at its core and an equitable sharing of responsibilities, a system that can put its high principles into action, building on its ethical foundations to achieve unprecedented progress in the development of global civilization.

The proposals that we submit here are put forward in a spirit of humility, as a contribution to the necessarily wide-ranging consultations on how to catalyze and to craft reforms that will allow us to build on our strengths – from the spread of knowledge and new technologies to the availability of wealth and resources, citizen engagement, the progressive empowerment of women, our inherent international cultural diversity, among others – to chart a better future. We invite all to join in an effort to stimulate creative thinking, to explore possible governance mechanisms, institutional reforms, and pathways forward toward a positive and secured collective future. The enormous difficulties of this undertaking and the challenging times ahead should be acknowledged, but every global citizen needs to be inspired by positive visions of the better future that is possible. The world urgently needs an ever-widening circle of those working for the institutional and social reforms necessary to transition to a sustainable, globalized yet diverse society.

Reshaping international governance is not ultimately solely about institutions, structures or even funding. It is about protecting all that we hold dear and ensuring a safe path for humanity during and beyond the 21st century. It is about leaving to our children and successive generations a better world than the one we were born into, one in which they find the conditions that will enable them to develop fully all their capacities, not one in which they will have to deal with the painful consequences of an unpredictable and deeply dysfunctional global order.

Acknowledgments

We are very much in debt to a number of colleagues who have provided us with feedback, insights, encouragement and support during various stages of this project. We would like to mention, in particular, Robert Ahdieh, Payam Akhavan, Anthony C. Arend, Gustaf Arrhenius, Louis Aucoin, Ludvig Beckman, Samantha Besson, Kit Bigelow, Andreas Bummel, Lidia Ceriani, Diana Chacon, Benedicte Vibe Christensen, Drew Christensen, Sean Cleary, Richard Cooper, Mary Darling, Clark Donnelly, Bani Dugal, Zachary Elkins, Amanda Ellis, Claudia Escobar, Natividad Fernandez Sola, Jose Maria Figueres, Marc Fleurbaey, Nancy Peterson Hill, Lise Howard, Maria Ivanova, Didier Jacobs, Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Saeko Kawashima, Robert Klitgaard, Sanford Levinson, Amy Lillis, Maryann Love, Paulo Magalhaes, Cristina Manzano, Jessica Mathews, Bahia Mitchell, Joachim Monkelbaan, Eduardo Pascual, Richard Ponzio, Rod Rastan, Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze, Robert Rotberg, Daniel Runde, Mahmud Samandari, Natalie Samarasinghe, Steve Sarowitz, Donald Steinberg, Mirta Tapia de Lopez, Teresa Ter-Minassian, Christie S. Warren, Thomas G. Weiss, Christian Wenaweser, John Wilmot, Mark Wolf, Erol Yayboke and Guillermo Zoccali.

We are particularly grateful to Mats Andersson, Jennie Baner, Bjorn Franzon, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Christer Jacobson, Magnus Jiborn, Fredrik Karlsson, Sarah Molaiepour, Jens Orback, Johan Rockstrom, Kate Sullivan, Laszlo Szombatfaly, Folke Tersman and their colleagues at Sweden's Global Challenges Foundation and the eminent members of the international Jury, who awarded us the New Shape Prize in 2018 for a proposal that contained the key ideas of this book and whose support and encouragement have made a critical difference in terms of our ability to turn those ideas into the more detailed proposals contained here. One of us is especially grateful to Joel Hellman, Dean of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, for their hospitality during the entire period of this project. Georgetown has provided a nurturing environment for the

research underpinning this work and Clare Ogden, Fellows Administrator, provided efficient assistance on multiple occasions.

Herman Bajwa, Manon Beury, Nahid Kalbasi, Dorine Llanta, Issac Liu, Yasmina Mata, Nima Nematollahi, John Miller and Allison Semands provided high-quality support as research assistants on many occasions over the past year and a half. We are grateful to John Berger and Chloe Quinn at Cambridge University Press, and Elizabeth Stone at Bouchier, for managing the various aspects of this project, from helping us turn our ideas into a book project, to copyediting of the final manuscript. Nancy Ackerman from AmadeaEditing provided expert additional editorial help. Any limitations and imperfections in the book, however, are the responsibility of the authors.

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