

How to Heal a Torn World – Respect, Trust, Reliability, and Mutual Understanding

Jörg Habich | Verena Nowotny | Philip Remete

I Introduction

“Heal the world. Make it a better place. For you and for me and the entire human race. There are people dying. If you care enough for the living. Make a better place for you and for me.” On November 11, 1992, Michael Jackson released the song “Heal the World,” already referring back then to the grievances and problems present on earth using a similar title.

“Heal the world” implies the existence of an ideal world. Everyone who shares this vision can be understood – how lovely does it sound to dream of a land without any problems? A world without war, strife and conflicts: a kind of place of exceptional happiness and delight. That sounds a lot like paradise – the promised land of Judaism. For Christianity and Muslims, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” for others, like emigrants who had the hope of new beginnings in another land with a prospective future. The former propaganda of the planned economy promised a similarly bright future.

More and more often, however, we are faced with a world that needs to be healed or in which it is particularly difficult to build “bridges of understanding.” The world has become increasingly complex and is currently being shaken by several crises, ranging from war, armed conflicts and terrorism to an ongoing pandemic and economic turbulences, to an escalating threat due to climate change. Thanks to the globalized (social) media, these crises appear not to be happening one after another but are felt simultaneously: Information is always available and updated.

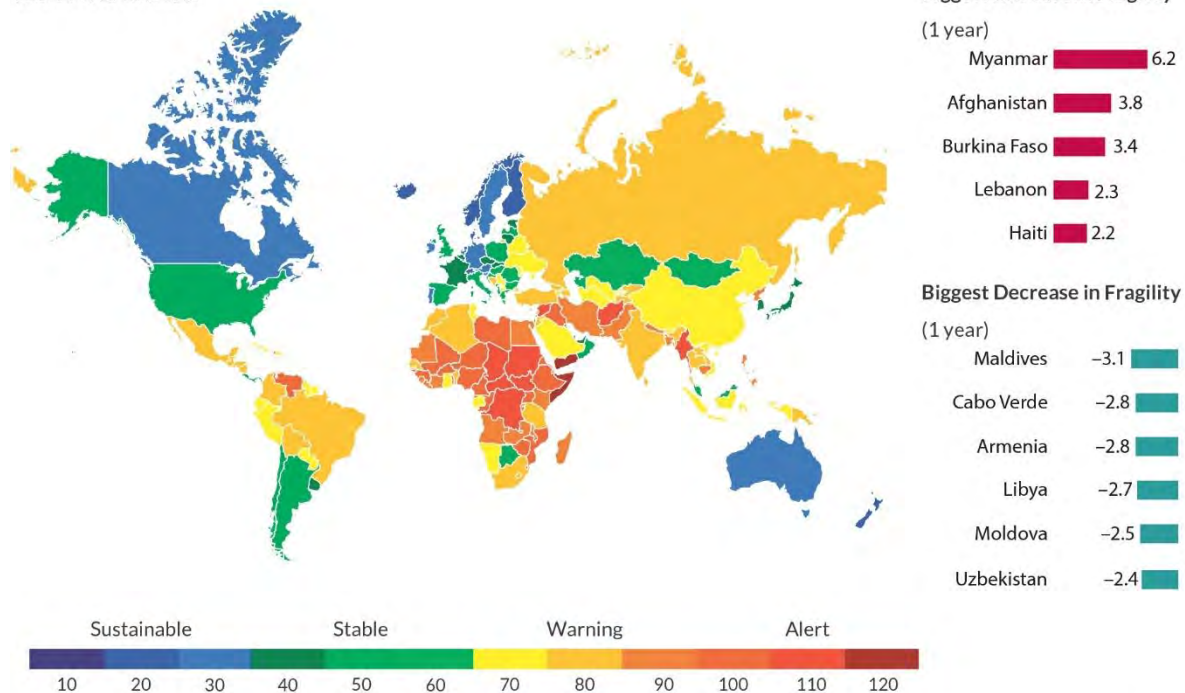
A quick look at the Figure “Fragile States Index Heat Map” shows that, while the situation in western countries remains relatively stable, in the east and the southern hemisphere it is getting more and more serious.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that in today’s globalized world, problems no longer directly affect only individual, but several states or regions simultaneously. However, there can be differences in the perceived burden these problems pose depending on the degree to which people are affected or, as we have seen, where they come from. For example, the effects of climate change are now felt more acutely in countries in the Southern Hemisphere than in countries in the Northern Hemisphere. However, as the trend towards more frequent and severe weather extremes is expected to intensify over the next 50 years, the number of natural and humanitarian disasters will continue to grow in the future.¹

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/04/climate-change-natural-disaster-losses/>, [retrieved July 27, 2022].

Fragile States Index Heat Map

The World in 2022



Source: The Fund for Peace. Fragile States Index 2022. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/analytics/fsi-heat-map/>.

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Of course, global problems cannot be solved by just a few individual actors but require a joint commitment. Yet with the multitude of problems present today, it is sometimes no longer obvious which parties are affected by which problems and thus have an interest in finding a solution. The first step of naming and recognizing a partner or opponent that can be the solution to (or the cause of) problems is not always that easy. As we can see, even countries that recognize each other can be in conflict or have different perceptivities: While the enclaves Ceuta and Melilla have led to diplomatic tensions between Spain and Morocco², Turkey and Greece have been close to war more than once due to claims regarding islands in the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea.³

At least in these situations, the possible conflict partner can be named but there are also situations in which no or no sufficient problem-solving options have been identified or developed so far – i.e., to remain with the current example, it is not simply a matter of (re)claiming territory or resolving the fight over it.

Even if a suitable partner or opponent has been found, this does not mean that his or her proposals for solving the problem also correspond with one's own ideas. Since each party has its own interests and background, the next step is to align the proposed problem-solving measures. As numerous bilateral and multilateral negotiations at annual summit meetings show, this is extremely difficult (especially when many states are involved and have different negotiating power), but not impossible. The success of these negotiations can be seen in examples such as the Montreal

² Abdelhadi, Magdi. Ceuta and Melilla: Spain's enclaves in North Africa. BBC, June 5, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57305882>, [retrieved July 26, 2022].

³ Güsten, Susanne and Rodothea Seralidou. Türkei und Griechenland: Was hinter dem Streit um Ägäis-Inseln steckt. Deutschlandfunk, July 1, 2022. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/streit-aegaeisinseln-tuerkei-griechenland-100.html>, [retrieved July 26, 2022].

Protocol, which has contributed to the recovery of the earth's ozone layer and the closing of one of the largest ozone holes⁴, or the Paris Climate Agreement, which (as the successor to the Kyoto Protocol) aims to reduce further global warming.

In the end, after the urgency of the problems has been recognized, suitable contractual partners have been found, joint solutions have been developed and corresponding agreements have been signed, the question remains of whether the respective parties will also abide by the rules of these contracts. As we have seen in the past, this is not always the case. States repeatedly break treaties that have been concluded (think of the numerous infringement proceedings that the European Court of Justice has dealt with over the years) or, as in the case of the US and the Paris Climate Agreement, withdraw from the obligations of these treaties. This not only prevents problems from being solved, it also reduces the trustworthiness of these rule-breaking states at the same time. After all, what value does the word of a person and the promises of a government have if one cannot rely on their being kept? Trust and reliability are therefore not only the basis for negotiations and international treaties, but also essential to mastering today's and tomorrow's global challenges.

II Healing a Torn World

1. Healing an Imperfect World

The world was shocked when, after the installation of more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine, Russia started its invasion of the country in February 2022. Politicians worldwide made appeals to de-escalate the situation by using diplomatic efforts to find a solution and avoid a war in Europe. Reality remains far away from an ideal situation. Against this background, it seems appropriate to ask whether there was ever a world that was not torn apart or worth healing?

To "heal" implies different meanings – from making well again and restoring to health, to causing (an undesirable condition) to be overcome, to restoring a state of original purity or integrity.⁵ So it is about restoring something or achieving a condition again – something that is broken or was in any case different at some time in the past. Consequently, not only the request to "heal the world" is thinkable, but it also might be possible to "heal" the hope for a common understanding, shared rules and a fact-based dialogue.

Perhaps it is helpful to address the topic from a different perspective: Instead of searching for a healed world, the question is rather whether or not the world is (more) broken nowadays. A broken world or a world that needs to be healed must by definition be imperfect. Undoubtedly, the current situation is imperfect: International politics has just made a 180° turn – there is a policy of separation in many places, fact-based dialogue no longer takes place, truths are twisted, threads of conversation have ruptured and mutual understanding has become more difficult. The situation is also worrying in other parts of the world, throwing entire countries into chaotic conditions. This short list

⁴ Walker, Kira. What happened to the world's ozone hole? BBC, March 22, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220321-what-happened-to-the-worlds-ozone-hole>, [retrieved Jul. 27, 2022].

See also: O'Malley, Isabella. Ozone layer hole that was once larger than Antarctica has finally closed. The Weather Network, Dec. 30, 2021. <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en/news/climate/solutions/ozone-layer-hole-that-was-once-larger-than-antarctica-has-finally-closed>, [retrieved July 27, 2022].

⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heal>, [retrieved July 20, 2022].

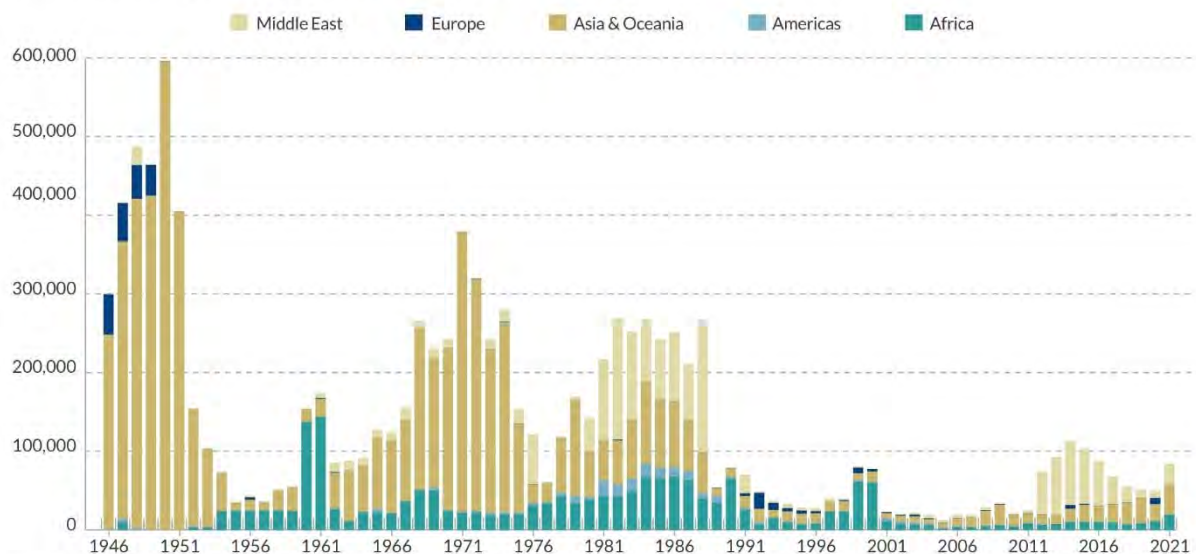
shows that our torn world has many problems and faces a variety of challenges. But does this also mean that this imperfect world can and needs to be “healed”?

Steven Pinker argues that people live much longer today than they did a few decades ago, that certain diseases have been conquered and that poverty has been greatly reduced worldwide.⁶ Furthermore, the late Hans Rosling, former professor of International Health at Karolinska Institute, wrote an entire book on why the world is better than we usually think today.⁷ A closer look at the Figure “Deaths in State-based Conflicts, by World Region” also shows that the number of casualties directly caused by conflicts between nations has decreased in recent decades. Therefore, objectively there is good reason to argue that the world is a better place than it was a few decades ago.

However, the figure also shows that the problem becomes more critical depending on the region, and while the total number of deaths is falling in Asia-Oceania, the situation has worsened significantly in the Middle East since the 2010s. There remains a feeling, a perception, that the planet is facing problems that are existential (even in specific regions), that are – even if only supposedly – more difficult to solve than in the past. Then the question cannot be whether the world of today is more torn than some past world, but how to focus on today’s problems.

Deaths in State-based Conflicts, by World Region

Civilian and military deaths in conflicts where the government of a state was a participant on at least one side. The data counts only direct violent deaths (i.e. excluding deaths from disease or famine).



Source: Own calculation based on PRIO and UCDP
 Lacina, Bethany and Nils Petter Gleditsch. Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths. In: *European Journal of Population*, Vol. 21 (2005), pp. 145–116. <https://www.prio.org/data/1>.
 and Davies, Shawn, Therese Petterson and Magnus Öberg (2022), Organized violence 1989–2021 and drone warfare. In: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (July 2022), pp. 593–610. <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#battlerelated>.

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These problems are 1) more or less complex, and thus 2) more or less solvable, which 3) can lead to more or less costs in solving the problem. Problems can also 4) be divided into sub-problems, 5) be more or less related to each other, but are above all 6) subject to subjectivity. This then automatically leads again to the discussion of whether a world is really perceived as broken by

⁶ Pinker, Steven. *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, Viking Press: New York, 2018.

⁷ See Rosling, Hans, Ola Rosling, Anna Rosling Rönnlund. *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong about the World – And Why Things Are Better Than You Think*. London: Sceptre, 2019.

everyone or whether this assessment is dependent on individual perception – one person’s problem can be another’s solution.

Nevertheless, there are problems and there is a consensus that they seem to affect everyone in this world. The most important global problems include the perennial issue of “war and terrorism,” humanity’s new issue of “climate change” and the issue of inequality between poor and rich countries or poor and rich people. The UN identifies a wide range of issues facing the world (some are interconnected): Africa, Ageing, AIDS, Atomic Energy, Big Data for Sustainable Development, Children, Climate Change, Decolonization, Democracy, Disarmament, Ending Poverty, Food, Gender Equality, Health, Human Rights, International Law and Justice, Migration, Oceans and the Law of the Sea, Peace and Security, Population, Refugees, Water, Youth.⁸

2. Living in a Torn World

Against this background, it is easy to say that we live in a torn world today. But what exactly is meant when we say that the world is “torn”? Where do we discern this brokenness (“torn apartness”) and what would be the opposite, ideal state? And finally: Is this rift perceived in the same way all over the world or are there regional/local differences in perception?

First, let’s have a look at the meaning of the word “tear” or “torn”: According to Merriam Webster, “tear” as a verb means “to separate parts of or pull apart by force” or “to divide or disrupt by the pull of contrary forces.”⁹ This indicates that the state of something before being torn could be characterized by unity and health, whereas the state afterwards shows brokenness and diversity. Multiple other meanings, such as being torn between two choices or to be torn apart by something, as well as different levels of observation can influence what is meant by the word “torn.” Sometimes not only individuals but also groups or even whole societies are in danger of being torn apart or have already been torn apart. Especially at this point, communication or understanding becomes difficult or even impossible. We can consider once again of the huge difference between the rich and the poor in several countries all around the globe, or nations such as Afghanistan, Syria or Ukraine being torn apart by war. In essence, the word “torn” describes a process that leads to a state in which nothing is like it was before.

Second, most of the time when speaking of a “torn world,” the macro-level of a society in a country or between nations is meant. At the micro level, it is even difficult to compare a poor European with a rich person in Burundi, a country with a GDP of only \$236.79 per inhabitant.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, different levels require different solutions and foster the world’s fragmentation. In recent decades, governments and national and international organizations have tried to fight the contrary shifts that lead to a torn world. But in order to get back to the state of “before” or heal a torn-apart world, one would first have to think about what these states would look like. The goal has to be defined first, before solutions and actions are planned.

To frame it differently: What does a “unified and healed world” look like, assuming that this is the opposite of a “torn world”? What words do we use to describe a “non-torn world”? According to the

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues>, [retrieved July 21, 2022].

⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tear>, [retrieved June 24, 2022].

¹⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2021&locations=BI&start=1960&view=chart>, [retrieved July 18, 2022].

UN: a united, peaceful, open, friendly, fair, safe, free, good, independent, equitable world. And how might it be possible for nations, regions or people to live and work together?

3. Convergent or Divergent Ground

To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand that societies can be characterized by social universalities such as common language, norms, values, socialization of the next generation as well as regulations for deviant behavior.¹¹ Some would say that these universalities make a part of a culture of the society. One can therefore assume that a “unified” society is characterized by the fact that its members fully or at least largely share and internalize these universalities. Accordingly, a certain homogeneity would contribute to this unification. At the same time, whoever is not a member of the community or society is an outsider.

In practice, this would mean that most people speak the same language, share the same norms and values and that common rules of conduct are established to sanction deviant behavior. The “common ground” is highlighted. The hypothesis that (industrial) societies converge over time and differences between them recede is far from new (**convergence thesis**). Already in the 1960s, the economist Clark Kerr came up with the theory that “[i]ndustrializing countries are more nearly like each other, however varied they may be, than they are like commercial or agricultural [...] economies.”¹² In the years that followed, other researchers examined not only the theory of convergence but also divergence as results from the evolution of a world society (**divergence thesis**).¹³ Today, examples of a world that is becoming more homogeneous could be the increasing use and spread of the English language as a “universal means of communication” in business, science, social life¹⁴ and the internet¹⁵ or the establishment of global and international organizations such as the WTO, UN, World Bank, IMF or WHO in which almost all countries of the world are represented. To be functional, members of these institutions should share at least to some degree the same values or interests. And to operate successfully, it is necessary that members not only have similar goals and interests, but also respect the common rules. This means that in a healed world, there must be common ground – be it common values and norms or rules that can be followed, evaluated and controlled, including sanctions for free-riding and breaking rules. So it actually seems to be more about a predictable, rather than a “non-broken” world, where everyone follows the norms, rules and values that exist or have been established.

Admittedly, not all states and societies (or individuals) might share the preference for greater convergence, whether cultural, material or regulatory. Then the question of “more” convergence or “more” divergence can become a question of ideology. However, if the prerequisite for a healed world is a common ground, this question can also lead to an ideological confrontation. But even if this “common ground” is not emphasized, at least the acceptance of divergence is the prerequisite for an exchange and a fact-based dialogue. A framework for this exchange is needed.

¹¹ <https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/gesellschaft-35084/version-258573>, [retrieved June 24, 2022].

¹² Kerr, Clark, John T. Dunlop, Frederick Harbison and Charles A. Myers. *Industrialism and Industrial Man*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 15.

¹³ Meyer, J. W., John Boli-Bennett and Christopher Chase-Dunn. *Convergence and Divergence in Development*. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 1 (1975), pp. 223–246.

¹⁴ Neeley, Tsedal. *Global Business Speaks English*. In: *Harvard Business Review*, May 2012. <https://hbr.org/2012/05/global-business-speaks-english>, [retrieved Jul. 19, 2022].

¹⁵ https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language, [retrieved Jun. 24, 2022].

III Negotiation, Diplomacy and Mutual Understanding in a Torn World

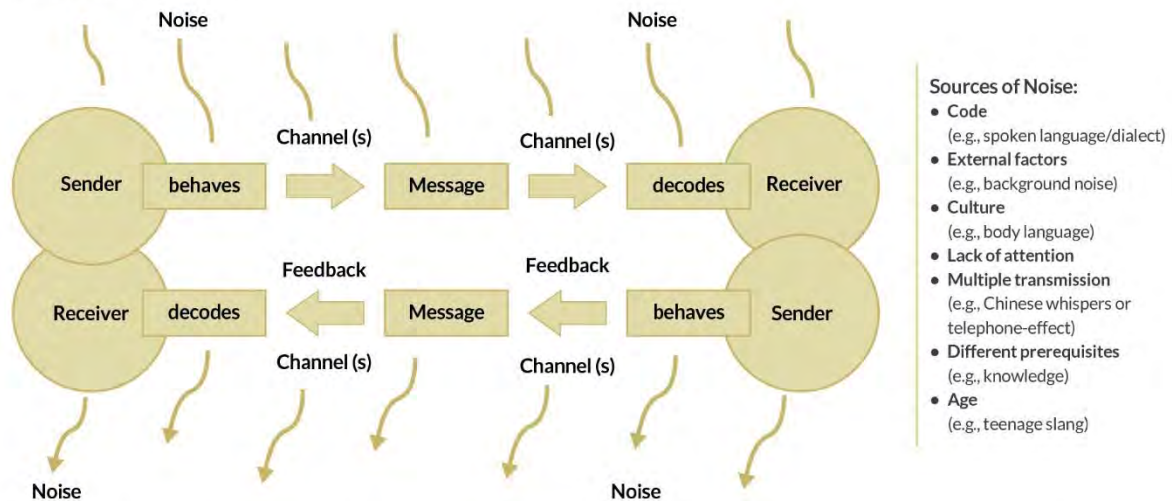
1. Negotiation

Obviously, not only the above-mentioned problems are a challenge, but rather the question of how to find a solution when different positions, approaches and ways of solving these problems exist. In this case, compromises, agreements, rules or ways of dealing with the challenges have to be found.

Negotiation is a dialogue between two or more persons or parties with the aim of achieving an outcome in one or more conflicts and (in the best case) to resolve differences. The negotiating process involves balancing matters between two parties so that each negotiator not only gets what she or he wants but also gets what she or he wants in the best possible way.¹⁶ It is an interaction between parties seeking agreement on matters of mutual interest, while optimizing their individual outcomes. This outcome may be beneficial to all or just some of the parties involved.

Negotiators need to understand the negotiation process and the wants and needs of the other negotiating parties in order to increase their chances of closing deals, avoiding conflict, building relationships or maximizing mutual benefits.¹⁷ This process is primarily determined by the following factors:¹⁸ 1) the underlying **interests** (wants, needs, motivations), 2) the quest for a fair deal (**legitimacy**), 3) the management of the **relationship**, 4) existing **alternatives** and available **options**, 5) **commitments**, which means agreements, demands, offers or promises made by one or more parties and 6) a **communication** process with the other party or parties.

Communication Process



Source: Own illustration based on Shannon-Weaver Model.

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¹⁶ Forsyth, Patrick. Negotiation skills for rookies. London: Marshall Cavendish Business 2019.

¹⁷ Muhamad Hariz M. Adnan, Mohd Fadzil Hassan Izzatdin Aziz, Irving V Papatungan. Protocols for agent-based autonomous negotiations: A review, 2016 3rd International Conference on Computer and Information Sciences (ICCOINS), 2016, pp. 622–626.

¹⁸ Harvard Law School. Negotiations Skills – Negotiations strategies and negotiation techniques to help you become a better negotiator, Cambridge, 2014.

At the end of these negotiation processes, there are in practice very concrete – formally or informally achieved – results, contracts or agreements. Be they bi- or multilateral agreements on territorial divisions, the distribution of resources, dealing with environmental pollution, free trade in a region or the question of how to secure peace in the world.

For a negotiation process, it is not only the goal and underlying interests that one wants to achieve that are crucial. It is also much more important that the transmission of the message and the negotiation process itself must be the subject of consideration (see Figure “Communication Process”). Thus, not only the content or the objective, but also the negotiation and the underlying communication process can become a field for misunderstanding, abuse or misperception. This means that even if there is a clear objective and message, different types and sources of noise can affect how a receiver understands a sender’s message.

2. Information Asymmetry Leads to Distrust

In addition to the deficits that result from communication, there remain several problems arising from the fact that the negotiating counterpart might behave differently than expected or assumed. These deficits are founded in information asymmetries, such as adverse selection, moral hazard and hold up, which make it difficult for negotiations to function efficiently: **Adverse selection** results in the selection of a partner ex ante with whom it is impossible to solve the problems. **Moral hazard** results from information asymmetry in a relationship, where one can observe the behavior but is unable to evaluate the partner’s actions. And third, the opportunism of the counterparty cannot be avoided due to a dependent relationship (**hold up**) because, for example, specific investments have been made.

Information Asymmetries and Governance Solutions

Problem	Risk	Solutions				
Hidden Characteristics	<p>Adverse Selection</p> <p>Knowledge advantage of one partner allows the other partner to assess the exchange relationship's characteristics only to a limited extent in advance.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Reducing Information Asymmetries by</td> <td>Signalling Screening Self Selection</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Harmonizing Objectives</td> </tr> </table>	Reducing Information Asymmetries by	Signalling Screening Self Selection	Harmonizing Objectives	
Reducing Information Asymmetries by	Signalling Screening Self Selection					
Harmonizing Objectives						
Hidden Action	<p>Moral Hazard</p> <p>The performance of one partner is not observable or cannot be assessed due to information asymmetry and the consequences have to be addressed by the other partner.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Reducing Information Asymmetries by</td> <td>Monitoring</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Harmonizing Objectives</td> </tr> </table>	Reducing Information Asymmetries by	Monitoring	Harmonizing Objectives	
Reducing Information Asymmetries by	Monitoring					
Harmonizing Objectives						
Hidden Intention	<p>Hold Up</p> <p>Partners are bound to each other by a lock-in effect in the risk of ex post opportunistic behavior.</p>	<p>Harmonizing Objectives</p>				

Source: Own illustration.

Each one of these problems can lead to mistrust or distrust, which can be seen as the functional equivalent of trust. According to Luhmann, trust helps to solve the problem of uncertainty, not by elimination, but by compensation.¹⁹ In trusting relationships or cooperation, actors assume that both parties act in a friendly manner and have neither hidden characteristics, hidden actions or hidden but fair intentions. The cooperation is characterized by (mutual or reciprocal) interdependence and limitation of behavioral risks. This means that the question of how to heal the world by negotiation must focus on the similarity or almost similarity of the objectives and the underlying trust. In this context, it will be crucial to consider the different perspectives, attitudes and, if necessary, path dependencies of partners.²⁰ The success depends largely on the extent to which the negotiating parties trust each other to implement the negotiated solution.

Without entering into a semantic discussion, the words “trust,” “(mutual) understanding,” “confidence” and “faith” are very similar in this context. They describe the condition that something is true or correct or is something one can rely on. What they have in common is that they attempt to avoid, circumvent or at least minimize the risks of information asymmetry. Conversely, it is precisely these values that prevent the difficulties mentioned, so that it is possible to solve the generally accepted problems.

The reliability that the other party follow rules, contracts or agreements is fundamental, especially when an exchange relationship is not a “one-shot game” but long-term-oriented. Contracts and agreements are based on the expectation of a person or a group to be able to rely on a verbal or written promise made by another person or group. A certain action subsequently should lead to a foreseeable reaction (predictability).

Failures, threats and (personal or institutional) unreliability undermine this predictability. It becomes almost irrelevant whether this distrust or unpredictability is caused by rule-breaking, other interpretations of open aspects, or even whether the entire basis of interaction is being questioned. However, it is clear that under such circumstances no one would believe any longer in a cooperative world with agreements based on common rules.

If there is no reliability in agreements, etc., only the other solutions to reduce information asymmetry will be effective. In contrast, the need for signaling, screening, self-selection, monitoring or harmonizing objectives decreases the more trust is (re)established.

3. Diplomacy in a Torn World

Diplomacy is the work of maintaining good relations between governments of different countries (or in a broader understanding: different opinions) or the skill of handling affairs without arousing hostility.²¹ This implies the process and art of connecting states/regions/individuals to manage their relationships, which – in the case of states – can be done by diplomats, government representatives

¹⁹ Luhmann, Niklas. *Trust and Power*. Hoboken: Wiley, 1968.

²⁰ See: Habich, Jörg and Verena Nowotny. *Fragmented Realities – Searching for a Common Understanding of Truth*. In: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.). *Fragmented Realities – Regaining a Common Understanding of Truth*. Background Paper Trilogue Salzburg 2019. Gütersloh 2019, pp. 6–24.
See also: Habich, Jörg, Verena Nowotny, Philip Remete. *United in a Fragile World*. In: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.). *United in a Fragile World – Defining the Fine Line between Progress and Improvement*. Background Paper Trilogue Salzburg 2020. Gütersloh 2020, pp. 7–19.

²¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diplomacy>, [retrieved June 24, 2022].

or non-governmental actors. According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the functions of a diplomatic mission include (1) the representation of the sending state in the host state at a level beyond the merely social and ceremonial; (2) the protection within the host state of the interests of the sending state and its nationals, including their property and shares in firms; (3) the negotiation and signing of agreements with the host state when authorized; (4) the reporting and gathering of information by all lawful means on conditions and developments in the host country for the sending government; and (5) the promotion of friendly relations between the two states and the furthering of their economic, commercial, cultural and scientific relations.²²

The roots of diplomacy reach far back into the 13th century BC. Even then, there was an exchange of correspondence and delegations between the great empires of the Mediterranean region, Egypt and the Hittite Empire, which contained regulations for securing peace and were written in the languages of the two contracting parties. Over the centuries, other processes and methods have evolved that shape today's diplomatic procedures, techniques and forms of negotiation (e.g., Peace of Westphalia).²³ History has also produced numerous well-known diplomats: from the French Cardinal Richelieu, who established the first modern foreign ministry in the 17th century, to the notable diplomats of the 1815 Congress of Vienna, such as Talleyrand, Castlereagh and Metternich, to prominent present-day personalities such as Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright. What all these diplomats have in common is that they represented their country's interests on the international stage through diplomatic behavior, thus contributing to the regulation of relations between states.

The economy is of particular importance, as diplomatic relations are also influenced by the economic ties between states. The main purpose of diplomacy here is to reduce trade barriers and to promote an increase in prosperity through free trade agreements (e.g., NAFTA or CETA). At the beginning of the 21st century, markets have become one of the most important battlefields. Diplomacy therefore has to deal with the reduced use of military power and the rise of mandatory economic measures like sanctions.²⁴ In contrast, the economy needs a stable framework and legal environment for business activities.

Today, the scope of contemporary diplomacy no longer extends primarily to alliances, peace treaties, trade issues or disarmament talks. For contemporary diplomacy is confronted with far broader problems of modern societies: environmental disasters, financial and capital linkages with foreign markets, development assistance, human rights issues, (illegal) migration, cultural exchange programs, health development, organized crime, terrorist groups and much more.²⁵

²² https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=III-3&chapter=3&clang=_en, [retrieved July 20, 2022].

²³ Wilhelm, Andreas. *Diplomatie und internationale Politik*. In: Sauer, Frank, Luba von Hauff and Carlo Masala (eds.). *Handbuch Internationale Beziehungen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2015, p. 3.

²⁴ Stanzel, Volker. *Die neue Wirklichkeit der Außenpolitik: Diplomatie im 21. Jahrhundert*. In: SWP-Studie 2018. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/die-neue-wirklichkeit-der-aussenpolitik-diplomatie-im-21-jahrhundert>, [retrieved July 29, 2022].

²⁵ Wilhelm, Andreas. *Diplomatie und internationale Politik*. In: Sauer, Frank, Luba von Hauff and Carlo Masala (eds.). *Handbuch Internationale Beziehungen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2015, p. 2.

Accordingly, if diplomacy is viewed as a means to heal the “torn-apart-ness” of today’s world, two factors in particular are important: first, the form of diplomacy or rather the purpose which diplomacy should serve. The following forms are especially relevant to the question of how to heal the world:²⁶

- Peace diplomacy, which is to contribute to the settlement of disputes and the promotion of conflict-preventing relations through mutual communication and cooperation,
- Crisis diplomacy, which often consists of a mixture of coercion and positive strategy for the purpose of conflict management and damage limitation, and
- Preventive diplomacy, which serves to prevent crises and avoid the threat or use of violence.

In recent years, however, a new form of “**coercive diplomacy**” has developed within the framework of the United Nations, in which, in addition to diplomatic pressure, the threat and use of force by, for example, a UN-mandated alliance or a group of states commissioned by the world organization can simultaneously exert influence on a warring state and urge it to de-escalate or avoid the conflict. This instrument of coercive diplomacy was used by NATO’s military organization after the breakup of the Yugoslav state in the 1990s to force Serbia to end its military hostilities in Bosnia and Kosovo.²⁷

Second, the application of diplomatic behavior with distinctive norms and rules is also crucial for negotiation on an international level. The basic principles that have characterized diplomatic behavior almost since the dawn of diplomacy include the action or inaction of a negotiator,

- which demonstrates the negotiator’s willingness to compromise and to recognize the intentions and desires of each party involved (in the literature also called “reciprocity”²⁸), which is only possible if the people and positions of the parties involved are mutually respected;
- which attempts to understand the position of the negotiating partners – keyword empathy – and to reflect and remain flexible to one’s own position;
- which seeks so-called win-win situations from which all parties profit;
- which avoids, as far as possible, embarrassing or cornering other negotiators;
- which is likely to maximize long-term benefits.²⁹

Closely related to all this is trust as a commonly considered and fundamental basis of such diplomacy processes. However, it is precisely this trust that seems to be eroding or limited in view of the challenges and problems the world is faced with.

²⁶ A detailed overview of diplomacy can be found in the background paper to the 2020 Trilogue Salzburg titled “Rethinking Relations – Innovative Diplomacy in an Uncertain World.”

²⁷ Clark, Wesley K. The United States and NATO: The Way Ahead. In: The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov., 1999), pp. 2–14.

²⁸ Jönssen, Christer and Martin Hall. The Essence of Diplomacy. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 28.

²⁹ <https://handbuch.dmun.de/konferenz/diplomatie/>, [retrieved July 22, 2022].

Not only the problems diplomacy faces today are changing, but also the context in which it takes place. This has implications for diplomatic behavior, as the digital information age has made diplomacy more transparent and fast-moving. The Internet and social media make interactions between governmental and non-governmental representatives visible not only to a closed circle, but to the entire public. Diplomatic behavior can therefore be viewed in the context of the aforementioned formalized and distinctive norms and rules that are being used within the United Nations and regulated via the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations³⁰ and in the context of “public diplomacy.” It is still questionable who should be and who actually will be a diplomatic actor in the future.

Public diplomacy is characterized by information and opinions being published within a very short time using news services such as Twitter or Facebook, thus – as could be seen during the term of US President Donald Trump – promoting a “tweet first, think later” mentality.³¹ The aim is to provoke the strongest possible public reaction, which is why populist methods such as the use of emotions and the simplification of complex issues are often used, due to the deviating target group(s) – no longer only representatives of other states but the citizens of one’s own or other states – being addressed. This can result in the loss of a certain degree of discretion necessary for diplomacy, but also new strategies have to be developed in order to react adequately to such statements and to maintain the basic principles of diplomatic negotiation.

But even if public diplomacy is becoming more prevalent, states must work together to establish trustful and reliable relationships that are based on the mutual understanding of global challenges. To that end, the past decades have shown another growing trend in international relations: the rise of international organizations.

IV Role of International Organisations

As a result of many regional and international negotiations, there is now a network of international relations, organizations and agreements. Today, most of the nearly 300 intergovernmental and over 10,000 nongovernmental international organizations³² are well known to the public and appear in the media almost every day.

Normally, international organizations are created by negotiations between two or more subjects of international law, usually states, which sign a treaty under international law at diplomatic conferences.³³ These founding treaties are the basis for the emergence of the organization’s mission and goals as well as the rules and obligations the member states must take on. They have to be ratified by the responsible national bodies of the parties involved.³⁴

³⁰ United Nations. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf, [retrieved July 18, 2022].

³¹ Shapiro, Jeremy and Philip H. Gordon. Trump and the Rise of Sadistic Policy. In: *Foreign Policy*, Aug. 17, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/17/trump-the-death-of-the-deal/>, [retrieved July 18, 2022].

³² Union of International Associations. *Yearbook of International Organizations*, Vol. 5 (2021), p. 27.

³³ <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/politiklexikon/17655/internationale-organisationen/>, [retrieved July 14, 2022].

³⁴ Rittberger, Volker, Bernhard Zangl and Andreas Kruck. *Internationale Organisationen*. 4th Ed. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013, p. 85.

International organizations, sometimes called “**intergovernmental organizations**” (IGOs), need to be distinguished from “**international non-governmental organizations**” (INGOs) such as Fridays for Future, which are also of importance in the geopolitical arena, but have the status of a private law association rather than a recognized subject of international law.³⁵

By joining an international organization, governments

[...] promise to accept whatever rules and obligations that are in these treaties. These may include rules that are explicitly set out in the treaty, as when the Statute of the International Court of Justice says that decisions of the Court are final and binding on the states in the dispute (Arts. 59 and 60), and they may as well include indirect obligations that arise in the course of the operation of the organization, as when the UN Charter gives the Security Council the authority to create new legal obligations on UN members (Arts. 25, 39, 49). The former are known in advance by states when they join the organization, while the latter are more open-ended and involve some risk that future practice might create obligations on states that they were not expecting. In both cases, however, it is imperative to any understanding of the role and power of the organization that one pay close attention to its founding treaty. The legal terms in each treaty are the authoritative source of the obligations that states owe to each other and will be finely parsed long into the future by diplomats, activists, and states who look to use them to serve their own purposes.³⁶

It is further possible for international organizations to emerge through the decision of an already existing international organization, as long as it holds the necessary rights according to its founding treaty. Usually, international organizations are designed to last, have at least one organ and can differ in terms of their area of responsibility, their geographical scope and their membership.

Selected International Organisations

		Policy Fields	
		Comprehensive	Specific
Geographical Scope / Membership	Global	United Nations (UN)	FAO IAEA ILO IMF OECD OHCHR UNDP UNEP World Bank WHO WTO
	Regional	AU Arab League ASEAN EU	Council of Europe (CoE) OAS ADB AFDB EBRD IDB NATO OSCE
	Subregional	Comunidad Andina de Naciones (CAN) ECOWAS Mercosur	SAARC SADC SCO

Source: Own Illustration based on Freistein, Katja and Leininger, Julia. Handbuch Internationale Organisationen. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2012, p. 19.

While some international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) or the European Union (EU) are active in **comprehensive policy fields**, others have focused on **specific policy areas**.

³⁵ Von Arnould, Andreas. Völkerrecht. 4th Ed. Heidelberg: C. F. Müller, 2019, p. 24.

³⁶ Hurd, Ian. International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice. 3rd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 3–4.

Examples include the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Furthermore, international organizations can differ in terms of **membership**: While some, such as the UN or WHO, have almost all the countries of the world as members, others, such as the EU, the African Union (AU) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), are regionally limited.³⁷

International organizations can also be distinguished according to the extent to which member states have delegated **decision-making power** to them (“delegation”) or pooled it within them (“pooling”). In the case of **intergovernmental organizations**, decision-making power is neither pooled nor delegated. These organizations – for example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the International Coffee Organization (ICO) – only provide opportunities for horizontal coordination of national policies at the international level. National sovereignty remains untouched insofar as international decisions always require the consensus of all governments involved. In contrast, **supranational organizations** are based on a more hierarchical mode of governance with centralized decision-making processes. Although national governments are involved in decision-making in international organizations, consensus is not always required in supranational organizations. For example, in the Council of the EU, significant decisions can also be taken by qualified majority, and in the European Court of Justice, important decisions are even taken by independent judges.³⁸

With all these distinctions also comes the question of powers and regulation. Indeed, international organizations pose a dilemma: On the one hand, they are established by nations for a specific purpose and have a certain autonomy and personality independent of their members. On the other hand, in order to implement their mission and goals, it may be necessary to monitor or influence individual member states. It must therefore be clarified why states should abide by the rules of international organizations although the latter have only limited or no sanctioning possibilities. Furthermore, the question arises of whether and in what respect international organizations are endowed with powers to regulate the behavior of the states through whose power they came into being in the first place.

When evaluating international organizations, this power and authority are key points. For nowadays, most people have heard or read about the organizations mentioned so far. But only very few really understand their specific tasks and obligations, how they are structured and what tools they have for implementing these tasks. This often leads to criticism on how “slow,” “bureaucratic” or “inefficient” these organizations are. For example, it is easy to demand that Russia as a country and Vladimir Putin as a person be held accountable for the crimes perpetrated during the Ukraine war before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, knowing that the ICJ has already made a binding judgement in the case but does not have the means to enforce that judgement³⁹, and that the ICC can only investigate to a limited extent

³⁷ Rittberger, Volker, Bernhard Zangl and Andreas Kruck. *Internationale Organisationen*. 4th Ed. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013, p. 17.

³⁸ Rittberger, Volker, Bernhard Zangl and Andreas Kruck. *Internationale Organisationen*. 4th Ed. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013, p. 23.

³⁹ <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/europa/igh-zu-ukraine-101.html>, [retrieved July 12, 2022].

because Russia has withdrawn its recognition of the Rome Statute and Ukraine has only recognized it on an ad hoc basis⁴⁰, it becomes difficult to sustain these demands. This problem also applies to many other international organizations as there are only few which really have the authority and power to sanction states that break international rules.

V Overcoming a Torn World with Respect, Trust, Reliability and Mutual Understanding

Other trends that have become visible in recent years are the growing nationalism and distrust in international organizations all over the world.⁴¹ As a result, nations that have been members of international organizations for many years are withdrawing their membership (e.g., the UK's withdrawal from the EU or the planned withdrawal of the US from the WHO⁴²) or simply putting national interests above those of the international community, thus breaking previously established rules (EU infringement proceedings against Poland or Hungary⁴³).

The complexity increases when (parallel to the already existing global problems for which an understanding might be possible) difficulties in mutual understanding, in the process of solving problems or in interpreting the results of agreements already made are also taken into account. The main challenge is then to establish an exchange with states, regions and individuals who do not (or no longer) share common rules, values and norms, with those who do not behave in the way that would be expected and for whom sanctions for non-conforming behavior may no longer be effective. How can it be ensured that they nevertheless follow common rules, agreements, commitments and values – whether these are explicit or supposedly only implicitly applicable?

Rules are fundamental to achieving a peaceful coexistence between individuals, groups and states. Still, the past decades have also shown that there are situations in which one or more individuals do not abide by the rules and thus threaten the peace. In this case, it is necessary not only to establish rules in advance for dealing with rule-breakers, but also to implement them. While this can be relatively easy to implement at the individual level (the triad of the legislative, judiciary and executive branches should be mentioned here), the complexity at the national and international level continues to increase. As previously mentioned, while elements of the legislative (i.e., international treaties) and judiciary (i.e., International Court of Justice) are present, a concrete executive is lacking. Thus, individual actors are forced to take other measures to bring rule-breakers back into compliance.

⁴⁰ Leclercq, Sarah and Felix W. Zimmermann. Internationale Gerichte und Ukraine Krieg: Können Russland und Putin Verurteilt werden? In: Legal Tribune Online, March 2, 2022. <https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/igh-istgh-zustaendigkeit-ukraine-krieg-putin-russland-verurteilung/>, [retrieved July 12, 2022].

⁴¹ Ipsos Global Advisor: Beyond Populism? Revisited. https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-09/power_to_the_people_survey-2018.pdf, p. 18, [retrieved July 19, 2022].

⁴² Rogers, Katie and Apoorva Mandavilli. Trump Administration Signals Formal Withdrawal From W.H.O. In: The New York Times, July 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/us/politics/coronavirus-trump-who.html>, [retrieved July 14, 2022].

⁴³ Gerichtshof der Europäischen Union. Jahresbericht 2020: Rechtsprechungstätigkeit, 2021, p. 229. https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-04/ra_jud_2020_de.pdf [retrieved July 14, 2022].

In recent decades, sanctions have been used repeatedly to get states to change their behavior and comply with rules. For example, the US has imposed broad and targeted sanctions on over 6,300 specific individuals and entities.⁴⁴ The EU has also imposed economic sanctions on Russia since the annexation of Crimea, and in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Russian diplomats have been declared *personae non gratae* in several Western countries around the world.⁴⁵ But even if sanctions can be a means to influence state behavior, are they really a long-term solution that can restore peaceful relations between "opposing" states? Couldn't other methods be more helpful in establishing a "common ground" again?

In institutional economics, actors have several means at their disposal to counteract the problems of adverse selection, moral hazard and hold-up behavior (see Figure "Information Asymmetries and Governance Solutions"). Aligning the interests of the involved parties (in the international context, these are the national states) is one means to reduce information asymmetries and thus prevent deviant or harmful behavior by one party. This requires that all related parties be aware of the advantages of mutual interaction (e.g., peacekeeping and increased welfare) and that treaties between them include incentives to comply with rules (e.g., loss of reputation if they do not comply). In general, states need either to be aware of the cost-benefit ratio of international relations or they must value the disadvantages of a lack of international relations (e.g., exclusion from markets, lack of international support) higher than the benefits.

Even if, despite similar interests, individual actors continue to break rules and treaties, act disrespectfully, abuse the trust of contractual partners and thus make common understanding almost impossible, states that share similar values tend, as we have seen in recent months, to move closer together and seek alternative cooperation partners. Therefore, today as well as in the future, it is important 1) not only to keep the door open for talks and negotiations with rule-breakers (as hard as this may be), but also 2) conduct them in an unconditionally constructive manner and thereby primarily 3) help those groups and individuals who (through no fault of their own) suffer from the consequences of rule-breaking and treaty violations instead of imposing more and more sanctions.

As former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt understood years ago: "Nowadays, the most important thing is to learn how to understand other nations. And not only their music, but also their philosophy, their attitude, their behavior. Only then can nations understand each other."⁴⁶ It is therefore of great importance not just to focus on the Western or European ways of problem-solving but to be open to applying new and different methods that exist in other cultures and hemispheres.

⁴⁴ <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/where-is-ofacs-country-list-what-countries-do-i-need-to-worry-about-in-terms-of-us-sanctions>, [retrieved July 26, 2022].

⁴⁵ Gramer, Robbie. West Boots Out Hundreds of Russian Diplomats in Wake of Ukraine Invasion and War Crimes. In: Foreign Policy, April 7, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/07/us-europe-russian-diplomats-ukraine/>, [retrieved July 26, 2022].

⁴⁶ Schmidt, Helmut. *Weggefährten - Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*. Berlin: Siedler-Verlag, 1996, p. 58. Translated by the authors.

VI Recommendations

Currently, the world is torn apart: There are those who still believe in the rule of law, in treaties and pacts. Then there are those (state) leaders who write the rules themselves, who rule by law but stand above the law. The rule of law provides reliability, the generally accepted room to maneuver, transparency and predictability. Therefore, the rule of law is a pillar not only for the European Union but also for everyone. If we lose or dilute it, we lose the basis for our living together.

The following recommendations aim to address the challenges described above.

- **Build bridges of understanding:** Accepting that one is not always right, or the counterpart's perspective could also be valid. Mutual understanding is not only helpful in negotiation but also in living together. Leaders should overcome their self-perception and should reflect upon their own behavior (e.g., language, communication and interactions are sources of misinterpretation). A formalized code of diplomacy needs to be reestablished in politics, economy, and society.
- **Empower the Rule of Law Unit of the United Nations:** This unit already does a great job improving the rule of law, especially in Africa and other developing areas. Based on its vast experience, it would be worthwhile to develop a system for monitoring the state of the rule of law worldwide. The European Union already publishes an annual report that could serve as a blueprint.
- **Initiate an Expert Convention:** The EU's Conference on the Future of Europe has come and gone without any major resonance in the public. The input of citizens is highly appreciated; however, a lack of knowledge often makes their proposals ineffective or not actionable. Europe does not lack bright minds or outstanding experts in their respective fields; therefore, a convention comprised of scientists and intellectuals from all European countries could work on the most urgent tasks as well as possible solutions.
- **Rethink international organizations:** Apart from the never-ending discussion about a necessary reform of the UN and WTO, it could be useful to think about new or reorganized fora for specific common goals, such as international mobility (including transport, logistics, tourism, commuting, etc.). It would also be important to think about the underlying rules and regulations in order to make existing or new organizations more efficient and effective.
- **Establish various "diplomatic" channels:** In times of sanctions, there are usually two channels that could remain open to reach parts of a sanctioned country: culture and science. The Goethe Institute or the Austrian Cultural Forum could serve as a role model for an EU institution that fosters cultural and scientific exchange (as China tries to do with the Confucian Institutes).
- **Promote exchange programs:** Europe needs to become better in connecting its people with other countries outside the EU, such as China, Russia and African and other Asian countries. In this regard, the US has a long tradition, especially when it comes to high potentials. The EU needs to promote to potentially influential people abroad its values and convictions, as well as its efforts to create a society based on rule of law, as a way of increasing knowledge and acceptance of its own way of life.
- **Rethink the non-military tool-box:** Interestingly enough, the non-military toolbox remains extremely limited: sanctions. Although there have been endeavors to avoid inflicting unintended pain on innocent citizens, even targeted sanctions are the last resort to punish deviant behavior.

A change of behavior is not easily achieved; therefore, we need to develop a more sophisticated toolbox in order to deter autocratic states from breaking the rules.

- **(Re-)introduce a world policeman and global vision:** Since the US has changed its role as an international player and is no longer assuming its former role as the world's policeman, a replacement is needed. European and global institutions should work together to develop an agent with sufficient power to make states comply with international rules and enforce international law. A common vision for the future also needs to be developed, against which global political action can be aligned. If state or global actors (such as the UN) do not address this problem, private citizens and companies will step in (e.g., Elon Musk's interference in the Ukrainian war).
- **Say good-bye to Eurocentrism:** European powers have set the rules for a long time. However, Europeans need to learn from other regions in the world about their mechanisms of conflict resolutions. Unless Europeans establish close ties of understanding with other continents, it will not be possible to involve them in establishing an international framework of rules.

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