

DEMOCRATIZING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali deserves to be remembered for his defense of the application of democratic principles to the international order. Today, the multipolarity of the contemporary world can help further Botrous-Ghali's vision

By Antonio de Aguiar Patriota

Is the multilateral system democratic? This issue has gained renewed relevance since the invasion of Ukraine. A Russian veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) effectively prevented the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security from performing its role, which illustrates the difficulty in dealing with situations in which one of the five permanent members violates international law. And this is not the first time it has happened. The 21st century has witnessed other unilateral military interventions incompatible with the United Nations (UN) Charter, as was the case in Iraq. This time, the organization was challenged by the President of Ukraine to demand compliance with international law by all or confront the risk of its decreasing significance.

An incipient reaction came about with the adoption, by the General Assembly (UNGA), of a resolution demanding that the author of a veto justify it to the organization's membership as a whole. The Summit of the Future, convened by Secretary-General (UNSG) António Guterres for September 2024, can become an opportunity to guide multilateralism toward greater democratization. As 2022-23 marks Former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's centennial, his pioneer role in promoting a more democratic international system deserves to be recalled.

The first session of the Security Council with Heads of State participation took place in January 1992, when the Egyptian diplomat Boutros Boutros-Ghali had just assumed command of the United Nations in New York. The end of the Cold War was celebrated amid the expectation that the multilateral system would guarantee a promising era of international cooperation. The UNSC summit commissioned a report from the newly appointed Secretary-General and assigned him the task of drafting recommendations on the future role of the UN in promoting a more peaceful world. The report presented by



Boutros-Ghali in May 1992, known as *An Agenda for Peace*, is a landmark document on peace and security. A few months ago, it was the subject of a seminar organized by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) to commemorate the thirty years since its publication. In fact, the text was reaffirmed by the identification of six core areas for a New Agenda for Peace.

△ Former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali answers questions after his arrival at the eleventh annual Non-Aligned Summit conference in Cartagena, Colombia, Oct. 17, 1995. Reuters

In his autobiography *Unvanquished*, Boutros-Ghali recalls two innovative proposals included in that text: the preventive deployment of peace operations as a way of preventing accumulated tensions from degenerating into open conflict, and the creation of permanent rapid reaction units—with a mandate to use force if necessary—in what is commonly known as “peace enforcement.” The first idea was implemented in the former Yugoslavia, where it helped to prevent the war in Bosnia from spreading into the southern Balkans. The second suggestion was more controversial. The creation of a permanent military mechanism capable of intervening in conflict situations received some support from the Western and Arab specialized media. At the same time, however, a host of critical voices denounced the Secretary-General for an alleged attempt to create an international army under his command.

This second proposal was eventually shelved. On the other hand, two paragraphs included in *An Agenda for Peace* largely unnoticed at the time, deserve to be remembered in the troubled 2022 international scenario. These are the paragraphs in which Boutros-Ghali defends the application of democratic principles—both domestically and within the community of nations—and associates the construction of peace with the promotion of democracy in the national and international spheres. By referring to democratic principles in this way, Boutros-Ghali brought into the multilateral domain a concept that had not been mentioned in the 1945 United Nations Charter. Although founded on the principle of the sovereign equality of all member states, the UN injected a dose of institutionalized inequality into its decision-making processes by providing five permanent members of the Security Council with the right to veto. Over the years, these five permanent members (known as the “P5”) would further enhance this original inequality, due to certain practices (not enshrined in the Charter) which granted them other privileges, such as guaranteed participation in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The other members of the organization allowed this to happen without putting up much resistance throughout the Cold War and during the so-called “unipolar moment.”

In May 1994, Boutros-Ghali would add in his *An Agenda for Development* the notion that democratic principles must be also observed in the work of the UN itself, postulating that dialogue, debate, and the search for agreements constitute the essence of democracy “within nations and within the family of nations.” Shortly before the end of his tenure as Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali issued *An Agenda for Democratization*, which may be considered a last plea in favor of an open and equitable multilateralism. Sri Lankan jurist M. C. W. Pinto attributed the origin of these views to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of which Egypt was a founding member under Gamal Abdel Nasser. In an article entitled “The Democratization of International Relations and its Implications for the Development and Application of International Law”, Pinto recalls that this notion manifested itself in successive declarations of the NAM since the beginning of the 1970s, before being endorsed, in 1992 and 1994, in both *An Agenda for Peace* and *An Agenda for Development*. Without diminishing the pioneering role attributed to the Egyptian Secretary-General, Pinto does not minimize the difficulty in transposing a concept that was historically applicable to national political systems to the international order.

What should we understand by democratic principles? As we know, the term democracy derives from two Greek words: *demos*, “people,” and *kratos*, which can be translated as “power” or “government.” The concept of democracy has undergone considerable historic evolution since its emergence in ancient Greece two and a half millennia ago. Needless to stress that today it would be inconceivable to call a society democratic should it not grant the right to vote to all its adult members, at a minimum. In addition to popularly elected government

representatives, a non-exhaustive list of elements that are essential to a democracy would include the rule of law, civil liberties, pluralism, an independent judiciary, and the protection of minorities. Democratic constitutions establish parameters for the actions of governments elected by majority vote, whose legislative bodies deliberate on matters not constitutionally regulated and may resort to pre-established procedures to amend the constitution or replace rulers.

While recognizing the difficulty in establishing a strict parallel between national societies and the international community, Pinto suggests four main historical references, which provide a framework for a discussion on the democratization of the international order. He begins with the concept of sovereignty, dating back to the Westphalian accords of 1648, thereupon granting states unprecedented freedom in defining their national priorities. The concept of sovereign equality among states, which emerged from the 1907 Hague Conference, represents a further step toward an anthropomorphic view of the units that constitute the international fabric, allowing their rights and obligations to be equated, to a certain extent, with those of individuals within a society. The Treaty of Versailles of 1919 held the self-determination of peoples as a basic precept of a new order, which would translate—after being incorporated into the UN Charter in 1945—into the decolonization process that resulted in the present international community of 193 independent states. Finally, claims for “redistributive justice,” inherent to proposals that prescribe more favorable treatment for developing countries, represent a means of correcting inequalities or compensating for injustices that emulates internal democratic practices.

In a book published by the universities of Princeton and Oxford in 2014, under the title *Good-Bye Hegemony*, political scientists Richard Ned Lebow and Simon Reich formulate an additional axiom. They maintain that it is difficult to reconcile the defense of democracy, at the internal level, with the pursuit of hegemony internationally. Based on this premise, the two authors argue strongly in favor of applying the commitment to democratic principles at the national level also to international relations. They depict the position of international relations scholars who support hegemonic agendas, yet neglect their intrinsic incompatibility with democratic values, as indefensible. The preface to the book states that theirs is not a utopian vision, as they place themselves within the legacy of realist Hans Morgenthau, who encouraged international relations theorists to challenge the conventional thinking of their societies in potentially transformative directions. The book’s subtitle, *Power and Influence in the Global System*, further clarifies the theoretical tradition with which the two authors identify themselves.

It may seem surprising that a representative from Egypt assumed the role of spokesperson for democratic values in 1992. At the time, Egypt was ruled by Hosni Mubarak, a leader who had risen to the presidency of his country

after the assassination of Anwar Sadat and would remain in power for thirty years before being removed by a popular insurrection in February 2011. As a representative of the largest Christian community in the Arab World, however,

As a representative of the largest Christian community in the Arab World, Boutros-Ghali was particularly sensitive to the importance of a feature of truly democratic regimes: namely, the protection of minorities.

Boutros-Ghali was particularly sensitive to the importance of an aforementioned feature of truly democratic regimes: namely, the protection of minorities. Due to his Christian Coptic confession, he had never been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, although, in practice, ministerial responsibilities had been assigned to him under the title of Secretary of State. His stance stemmed less from the direct

experience of democracy in the government he had been a member of, than from his personal adherence to an ideology that would become increasingly explicit throughout his international career.

Boutros-Ghali's innovative leadership was hailed in the opening speech of the 48th UN General Assembly in 1993 by the Foreign Minister of Brazil, Celso Amorim. Recalling a speech by one of his predecessors—João Augusto de Araújo Castro—exactly thirty years earlier, Amorim proposed that the international agenda be structured around “‘3 D’s’: Democracy, Development, [and] Disarmament,” with due attention given to its ramifications in the fields of human rights and the environment. The introduction of the first “D” for democracy was made to replace the “D” of decolonization, which was thought to have shed its significance by 1993. A decade later, similar reflections would be taken up at the opening of the 58th General Assembly, in a speech by then-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who equated the improvement of the multilateral system with that of enhancing democratic coexistence within states. As he stated, “every nation that practices democracy must strive to ensure that in international affairs, decision-making is equally open, transparent, legitimate and representative.”

In contrast with the atmosphere of renewed hope prevalent at the 1992 Security Council Summit, however, the debate at the General Assembly in September 2003 took place against a backdrop of divisions and recriminations stemming from the U.S.-led military intervention against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Without authorization from the UNSC, and under a pretext that would be proven false, that initiative derived from the trauma caused in American society by the universally condemned terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on one hand, and reflected a “unipolar moment” of undisputed U.S. military and economic preeminence on the other. Unwilling to accept limitations on the use of force prescribed by international law, the United States, under George W. Bush thus put an end to the multilateralist disposition of his father, George H.

W. Bush. Brazil would declare on the same occasion: “Let us not place greater trust on military might than on the institutions we created with the light of reason and the vision of history.”

The relationship between multilateralism, democracy, and the promotion of peace, brought to the fore by Boutros-Ghali, came back into focus. Today, the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation confronts the multilateral system with a new episode of violation of central precepts of the UN Charter by a permanent member. In condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the General Assembly expressed a particularly emphatic repudiation of the unauthorized use of military force and the violation of the territorial integrity of a member state. It did so by assuming the powers conferred upon it by the *Uniting for Peace* resolution, invoked no more than eleven times since its adoption in the 1950s, as a way of circumventing the obstruction of the Security Council by a veto.

It is worth recalling that, a few days before, Russia had vetoed a resolution at the UNSC that condemned its military action, thus preventing the body from expressing itself on a crisis of serious proportions. This occurred despite the fact that Article 27 (3) of the Charter stipulates that a state party to a dispute under consideration by the Council should abstain from voting. The resulting frustration with the paralysis of the Council was at the origin of the adoption by consensus of Resolution 76/262 on April 26, 2022, granting the President of the General Assembly the authority to call a formal session to publicly examine a veto’s justifications (or absence thereof). Bearing in mind that the veto is clearly the least democratic feature of the UN Charter, this resolution can be seen as symptomatic of a mobilization in favor of more legitimate and transparent procedures. Led by Liechtenstein, a country of forty thousand inhabitants, the initiative provides an interesting illustration of the elasticity of diplomatic space at the multilateral level. It is worth noting that none of the P5 opposed it.

At the same time, it would be incorrect to presume that a new international consensus in favor of a more democratic multilateralism has emerged. In truth, the manifestations by the General Assembly against the Russian invasion and the ensuing delegitimization of questionable vetoes conceal a reality of paradoxes and inconsistencies. Although the United States convened a summit on democratic values and ideals earlier in the year (*The Summit for Democracy*), those discussions did not address the issue of transposing democracy to the multilateral arena. On the other hand, countries that were not invited to the U.S. summit issued communiqués in which they committed to promoting “more democratic international relations.” The quote is taken from the joint statement released by Russia and China on February 4, calling for a new era in international relations and global sustainable development.

As a member of BRICS (a collective composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), Brazil has signed successive joint declarations in support of more representative and democratic global governance institutions. However, such declarations do not translate into a clear commitment by BRICS as a group in support of reforming the UNSC, with expansion in both categories of membership—permanent and non-permanent—as advocated by South Africa, Brazil, and India. The aspiration to reform and expand the UNSC in both categories has significant support from countries in all regions, which are persuaded that such an increase in membership is necessary to render the body more representative and legitimate. Nevertheless, members of BRICS—who regularly express support for the democratization of international relations—seem comfortable with a status quo of unequal representation. In truth, the defense of democracy as an organizing principle of the international system is an objective that does not bring together an obvious coalition of adherents. There seems to be scant coherence between the defense of more or less democratic values at home and its endorsement at the international level.

This situation invites those who are in favor of plural and democratic societies, and who uphold multilateralism, to articulate their positions without ambiguity. In theory, the association between good domestic governance and enhanced international cooperation under the sign of democracy would not appear to raise controversy. In practice, however, its defense is not simple. Threats to democracy have become noticeable even in territories where it had apparently grown solid roots. The shortcomings of multilateral institutions have been exposed by the war in Ukraine and COVID-19. Unilateralism, including by powerful democracies, has placed them at odds with international law. The deterioration in relations between China and the United States renders an already problematic context even more challenging. Still, the very scale of the current crisis is precisely what makes an ambitious effort all the more urgent. In this regard, the preservation of the essential tenets of the UN Charter, along with the introduction of necessary reforms to prevent erosion of the system, should receive due attention. This may indeed be starting to happen, as illustrated by the approval of the aforementioned resolution A/76/262 on the veto but also in the convening of the *Summit of the Future* by Secretary-General António Guterres for September 2024.

The unprecedented proposal for a summit dedicated to the “future” is part of the report *Our Common Agenda*, circulated by Guterres in fulfillment of the request contained in the *Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations*. In an indirect reference to the report by his Egyptian predecessor, Guterres included a section entitled *A New Agenda for Peace*, in which he admits that the organization has not been able to fulfill its role in this field. On the contrary, he considers that challenges have multiplied, instability has increased, and responses have proven unsatisfactory.

Six recommendations include sections on strategic risk reduction and in favor of a world free from nuclear weapons; a more effective prediction of security risks; the reduction of violence, including violence against women; the full use of the capabilities offered by the Peacebuilding Commission and its corresponding fund; and support for regional bodies as well as the “women, peace and security” agenda.

Such recommendations, made before the war in Ukraine, fail to provide new insights into either the substance of the UNSC’s activities or its *modus operandi*. In reality, the operational dysfunctionality of the Council does not occupy the center of the comprehensive menu of ideas and proposals offered by Guterres in *Our Common Agenda*. In a chapter dedicated to the adaptation of the United Nations to a new era, the Secretary-General limits himself to stating that it is up to the membership to decide on the functioning of the main organs of the UN system. While recognizing that the Security Council could be more representative through “more systematic arrangements for more voices at the table,” it does not go beyond an undetailed reiteration of suggestions such as the intensification of consultations with regional authorities or the exercise of self-restraint as regards the veto. This caution effectively shifts the responsibility back to member states, and encourages them to harness the imagination and boldness needed to achieve meaningful results at a summit aiming to revitalize multilateralism. The opportunity should not be missed.

The democratization of international relations can be the answer to the challenge presented by Guterres, when he confronts member states with the alternative between “breakdown or breakthrough.” The preservation of the centrality of certain notions contained in the UN Charter, which can be considered a true civilizational landmark for the promotion of peace, represent a necessary first step. Of foremost relevance is Chapter VII and the limitations on unilateral coercive action contained therein: use of force only in self-defense or authorized by the Security Council and military or economic sanctions in line with multilateral decisions. More broadly, the nonselective application of international law should be seen as a foundation for a more peaceful and cooperative international environment. Just as the domestic democratic order presupposes the indiscriminate application of the law to all citizens, regardless of their economic or political status, it is natural to assume that the law should not be selectively observed in the international order. Unfortunately, this is a postulate that, although unanimously accepted, is also frequently disrespected.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this understanding continues to be reaffirmed in consensus statements. The inclusion of paragraph 10 in the commemorative declaration of the three-quarters of a century of the UN was of special significance. Its opening sentence reads: “We will abide by international law and ensure justice.” The paragraph deserves to be quoted more extensively

because it also declares that international law, in addition to having a “timeless and universal” character, constitutes the indispensable foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world. Member states are committed, in the same breath, to fulfilling the agreements to which they are a party and to promoting respect for democracy, in addition to strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law. Without going so far as to explain whether this commitment applies to the international order, words such as these cannot be read as incompatible with democratizing purposes in a wider sense. On the contrary: they should be read as providing an incentive to proceed in this direction.

Our Common Agenda affirms that international legal regimes are essential for the protection of global public goods, among which Secretary-General António Guterres includes public health, the environment, and peace itself. With the aim of translating the commitment of the UN’s 75th anniversary declaration into a concrete initiative, Guterres proposed a “global road map for the development and effective implementation of international law”. This proposal acquired special significance in light of developments that had yet to occur when it was first put forward.

Not unrelated to this issue is the subject matter of an article published in the *New York Times* in June 2021 by academic and journalist Peter Beinart, who presents an insightful analysis of the expression international “rules-based order.” These words are being frequently used by the United States government and have become a common feature of G7 and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) communiqués. As Beinart helps to clarify, the defense of international law has a clear meaning and does not lend itself to ambiguity. On the other hand, “rules-based” remains a somewhat “nebulous” expression that may refer to instruments or rules that are not universally accepted. The established expression is, after all, the “rule of law” and not the “rule of rules.”

It is worth considering that, until recently, some of the most stalwart supporters of the resolution on the *Aggression against Ukraine* of March 18, 2022, either subscribed to or abstained from condemning doctrines providing for the use of force in a preventive manner, and were not detained by the lack of multilateral authorization to carry out coercive action. As Brazilian journalist Guga Chacra recalls in an article published in *O Globo* in January 2022, when we observe the United States questioning Russia in Ukraine, it is hard to ignore recent history. Be that as it may, and as we look toward the future, it is significant that all those who supported the UNGA resolution on the invasion of Ukraine have united in rejecting violations of Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, in which member states commit not to use force against the territorial integrity of any other state. The absence of an interpretative margin, under international law, capable of justifying military invasions such as those in Ukraine or other countries in the Middle East and North Africa is addressed by Professor

Ngairé Woods from the University of Oxford in an article published in the July/August edition of *Foreign Affairs*. According to Woods, the international legal order presupposes that the special responsibilities assigned to the most powerful should be manifested in their special commitment to safeguarding its essential provisions. If the most powerful violate the legal instruments they created, the order they are expected to guarantee can be weakened beyond repair.

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Ngairé Woods attributes to Machiavelli the political tradition according to which national interest would allow a state to disregard international law. However, as she makes clear, disrespect for central provisions of the UN Charter today introduces a degree of unpredictability in international relations that is disadvantageous to all. The recent track record of military interventions undertaken outside international law leaves no room for doubt in this regard. Woods sustains, however, that although divisions arising from the invasion of Ukraine and the growing hostility between China and the United States generate new systemic challenges, international cooperation has become more pressing than ever to avoid war, combat climate change, and prevent economic setbacks and hunger. Woods concludes that the potential benefits of well-informed diplomacy should not be underestimated, as they provide perspective and counterbalance. The article asserts that “the clarity of international law will help even the most powerful to see more clearly.” There could scarcely be a sharper statement. Albeit indirectly, the crisis in Ukraine may be helping reposition the UN Charter at the center of concerns about international order. The two-thirds of the member states that supported the March 18 UNGA resolution underlined the benefits arising from observing, in good faith, the obligations incumbent upon them as stipulated in the Charter. At the same time, those who abstained, or voted against, did not do so in the name of an alternative compendium of obligations and rights. In fact, those are countries that are known to be strongly in favor of precepts such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The European Union’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, when reflecting on multilateralism in the age of multipolarity, summarizes his proposal for reforming the multilateral system in three key points: consolidating what works, reforming what has proved ineffective, and extending the scope of multilateralism to new areas. If we leave what has proved ineffective for last, we can start by pointing to the nonselective application of international law as an example of what deserves to be consolidated.

As relates to new areas, *Our Common Agenda* identifies many challenges that would benefit from a multilateral framework of rights and obligations, such as public health, the vast environmental spectrum, outer space, and artificial intelligence. The promotion of international peace, by comparison, cannot be described as truly effective and is manifestly in need of urgent reforms. The inadequacies in the functioning of the Security Council and the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament are notorious cases.

In this regard, it is worth distinguishing between changes that can be introduced through innovative practices that do not involve amending the UN Charter and more profound reforms, which would require amendments to the Charter or even convening a Review Conference. Numerous improvements may be introduced through initiatives presented to the UNGA, or even simply by changing practices that are lacking in transparency and fall short of basic democratic standards. The more frequent use of the *Uniting for Peace* resolution and the new procedure that allows for a public questioning of the veto are examples of the role the UNGA is capable of playing in the face of an inoperative UNSC. It is curious to note, at the same time, that certain practices can be altered by a simple change in the attitude of states willing to correct them: in 2017, for the first time, a judge from the United Kingdom was not elected to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), thus ending an unregulated practice according to which the P5 would always be represented in the Court.

There are other changes in attitude which could have a regenerating effect in addressing important issues for world peace and for the multilateral system at large. For example, an ICJ manifestation, in response to a request from a group of countries, could call for the full implementation of Article 27 (3), according to which a party involved in a dispute brought to the attention of the UNSC should abstain from voting. In the field of disarmament, an interesting precedent was set by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which mobilized governments and succeeded in mandating the UNGA to negotiate a draft treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Considered a non-starter by some when initially proposed, the initiative evolved into a legal text that obtained a sufficient number of ratifications in 2021 to enter into force. The negotiating process was strongly opposed by nuclear powers and NATO, but the initiative went ahead and was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

However, it should be recognized that structural reforms such as the composition of the UNSC would require a degree of political mobilization that the ongoing negotiation processes do not seem capable of setting in motion. We thus come to the consideration of the opportunity to invoke Article 109 for the convening of a Charter Revision Conference. The *Leaders pour la Paix* (LPP) group, coordinated by former French Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin, recently presented their annual report for 2022 to the UN

Secretary-General. The document argues in favor of a new multilateralism rooted in a new humanism. Based on an appreciation of contemporary geopolitics, the group considers it essential to associate the question of the survival of human civilization on Earth with the mobilization of support for multilateralism and peace. As Raffarin affirms, the future of the planet only became a political issue relatively recently, but today it has made its way to the center of a younger generations' interest in international cooperation. Without the support of the young, a movement in favor of a more democratic multilateralism will probably struggle to advance. The UN Charter was written before environmental awareness became one of the defining themes of our times. Among other objectives, a review conference should consider incorporating into the UN Charter a call to our collective responsibility in this area.

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On June 22, 2022, I was part of the delegation that delivered the LPP's annual report to Secretary-General Guterres. The conversation flowed with spontaneity and went to the heart of the world's problems. Guterres expressed particular concern with a scenario of gradual replacement of multipolarity with a new bipolar distribution of power potentially harmful to multilateralism. To some extent, his words echo the difficulties anticipated by Henry Kissinger in the book *World Order*. The American diplomat states in his final chapter that the reconstruction of the international system is the most challenging task to be faced by contemporary leaders. In his view, the inability to coordinate adequate responses will not necessarily translate into a major interstate war (although he does not exclude this hypothesis) but above all into the progressive establishment of spheres of influence identified with specific forms of government and domestic structures. In his recent work *Adrift: How Our World Has Lost Its Way*, Franco-Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf introduces much darker notes, quoting George Orwell as he speaks of an irrationality that today jeopardizes the future of democracy, threatens respect for the rule of law, and undermines adherence to the set of shared values that gives meaning to the human adventure.

The spaces of autonomy that multipolarity offers will inexorably shrink if multilateralism is replaced by zones of influence around powers incapable of constructively engaging in cooperation to face common challenges. At the same time, political pressure in favor of a more democratic multilateralism may offer a way forward to overcome current difficulties. This is the possible

path to a “breakthrough”— the available answer to the challenge posed in *Our Common Agenda*. Certain reforms that appear to be unavoidable, such as the composition of the UNSC, will require a revision of the UN Charter. But just as the G20 replaced the G7, there should be no insurmountable obstacle to incorporating a greater degree of multipolarity into the premier forum in charge of collective security. In this case, as in the case of confronting global warming, the loss of biodiversity, and environmental degradation, it will be necessary to mobilize governments, civil society, the private sector, academics, the media, and the youth.

If we accept the premise that multipolarity can reinforce multilateralism, it will be important to unite efforts around democratizing platforms, while bearing in mind the pitfalls of competing hegemonic agendas. The

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preservation of the planet and human civilization on Earth are powerful unifying themes, which can become a counterpoint to ideological clashes, or arms races that promote fragmentation and impede international cooperation. The vast majority of nations do not feel any nostalgia for the Cold War. Bipolarity, a second time around, could entail more perverse geopolitical risks than those whose end was celebrated

at a Security Council summit in January 1992. In brief: the objective of rendering international relations democratic remains incomplete, acquires growing urgency, and requires sustained political efforts aimed at revitalizing multilateralism.

Boutros-Ghali was not reelected for a second term due to a veto driven more by domestic politics in one of the P5 than by concerns with the health of the multilateral system. In spite of this, his intellectual independence and his commitment to the democratization of international relations continue to inspire all those who see the United Nations as a vector for civilization and peace. The 1996 *Agenda for Democratization*, circulated shortly before he left the United Nations, upholds the notion that democracy should express itself at all levels of human activity—local, national, regional, and global. It encapsulates his belief in the possibilities offered by democracy for human beings to fulfill their potential and flourish. He would never part with this deeply held belief. As the representative of a country with a history that is measured in half a dozen millennia, Boutros-Ghali states with ironic detachment, in the afterword to his autobiography, that “single superpower hegemony is a transitory phenomenon”. His last words point to the dream of the founding signatories of the United Nations Charter, whose

expectation it was that the UN would be able to regenerate itself and deal effectively with a world destined to evolve in unpredictable directions. This dream is not over.

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