

Review Article

The Architecture of Global Order: International Organizations, Governance Challenges, and the Test of Crisis (A Focus on UN, WTO, IMF, Regional Bodies, and WHO's COVID-19 Response)

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Abstract

This paper examines the crucial, yet often debated, roles of major International Organisations (IOs), particularly the United Nations (UN), the WTO, and the IMF, within the framework of modern global governance. Globalisation creates collective action problems that are highly complex, involving pandemics, climate change, and financial instability, that demand effective international cooperation. However, IOs face pressure from sovereignty concerns, geopolitical divisions, and internal inefficiencies. This study employs a qualitative research approach, reviewing peer-reviewed literature, IO institutional reports, and public policy documents to develop a conceptual framework for IOs and global governance. A detailed case study of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) response to COVID-19 carefully examines the competing demands and capacities of global health governance and multilateral collaboration. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that IOs are undeniably vital for global collective decision-making. Yet, it also highlights how IOs struggle with funding models and enforcement by member states. The paper further assesses regional organisations to determine whether they complement or compete with IOs. In other words, the findings offer insights into whether regional organisations exacerbate problems in global governance. Despite their importance in addressing global challenges, IOS often faces dysfunction, political divisions among members, and inequalities. The study concludes that existing institutions must be reformed or new models of cooperative engagement developed to ensure that IOs remain relevant in a fragmented yet interconnected world.

Keywords

International Organisations, Global Governance, Pandemic, Climate Change, COVID-19, Public Policy, International Cooperation

1. Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century has witnessed an extraordinary progression in the sphere of globalisation, connecting the fortunes of nations more closely than ever before. There has been significant interdependence through transnational

flows and movements of goods, capital, people, information, and environmental impacts, which have essentially shaped the international landscape [52]. While this interconnectedness offers enormous opportunities for shared prosperity and

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progress, it also creates complex "collective action problems" that go beyond national borders and make it difficult for any single state to resolve them alone. Several issues, including climate change, financial instability, pandemics, terrorism, mass migration, and cyber threats, exemplify the stark gap between the global nature of these persistent problems and the largely state-centric approach of global politics [80]. This diversity represents the primary challenge of modern international relations. However, it has become essential for humanity to effectively manage shared risks and pursue common goals in a world politically divided into sovereign states.

The concept of global governance is viewed as a crucial framework for addressing this dilemma. Critically, global governance differs from the misinterpreted notion of a "world government." As Rosenau (1992) pointed out, governance describes "systems of rule where goals are pursued and attained through the exercise of control" (p. 4). This control does not necessarily mean a centralised, hierarchical, and bureaucratic authority. Nevertheless, global governance includes "the several ways in which individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs" (Commission on Global Governance, 1995, p. 2). It is a complex and mostly challenging process that involves a variety of actors, including states, international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and epistemic communities, which interact through both formal and informal means. These relations produce norms, rules, principles, decision-making procedures, and practices that help identify problems, set agendas, enact rules, implement solutions, and monitor compliance across borders [28].

In this complex environment of global governance, International Organisations (IOs) play a crucial yet often contested role and significance. Although formed through treaties among member states, the IOs possess legal personality, specialized institutional structures (such as secretariats, assemblies, and councils), and specific mandates. They serve as main forums for interstate negotiation, providing platforms for establishing rules and setting standards. They also offer technical expertise, resources, and mechanisms to influence state behaviour and resolve disputes [1]. IOs are seen as institutional means to foster cooperation, resolve conflicts, and provide shared goods globally, reflecting the broad goals of the United Nations (UN) system, from the general objectives of the UN to the specific functions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as the varied roles of regional bodies. The legal foundations for IOs, like the UN Charter, which begins with the aim "to save new generations from the rigours of war" and "to enhance social progress and improve standards of living in larger freedom" (UN Charter, 1945, Preamble), embody clear goals derived from the recognition of common vulnerabilities [5].

However, the effectiveness and legitimacy of IOs are con-

tinually scrutinised. They operate within the persistent tension between the demands of international cooperation and the privileges of state sovereignty and independence. They are heavily influenced by the interests of their most powerful member states, bureaucratic inefficiencies, resource limitations, and fundamental design flaws. Critiques include accusations of democratic deficit and lack of accountability, as well as claims of ineffectiveness, irrelevance, or even involvement in perpetuating global inequalities [9]. Their sovereignty, inherently derived from states, is exercised with varying degrees of autonomy. This makes them key topics in debates about power, representation, and control within the international system [39].

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the role, functioning, and challenges faced by major international organisations within the modern global governance framework. It is based on the premise that IOs are essential. The primary objectives of IOs are outlined in three key points.

- 1) To establish a significant conceptual framework for the comprehension of global governance and the specific characteristics, authority, and limitations of IOs.
- 2) To consciously explore the roles, achievements, and continuous challenges that major universal IOs (specifically the UN, WTO, and IMF) face and the evolving landscape of regional organisations in the contribution to global order.
- 3) To conduct a detailed case study of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) response to the COVID-19 pandemic, through the use of this crisis as a critical indicator to measure the capacities, constraints, and intrinsic pressures, particularly within global health governance, and multifaceted cooperation.

The WHO's declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 serves as a robust and appropriate case study. It blatantly signified both the vital necessity of strong international cooperation and the severe challenges posed by existing global governance mechanisms in the face of a rapidly evolving, borderless threat. The analysis of the WHO's response, its successes, failures, and the systemic constraints it faced, offers relevant insights into the broader dynamics, pathologies, and reform requirements affecting IOs across multiple functional domains in an era characterised by growing nationalism, geopolitical competition, and complex interdependence.

The methodology of this paper primarily relies on a qualitative research design, involving detailed studies of scholarly literature, institutional reports, and policy documents concerning international organisations and global governance (POG), as well as international organisations (IOs). A comprehensive review of literature is essential for building a robust conceptual framework to understand global governance, including the distinctions, jurisdictions, and limitations of international organisations such as the UN, WTO, and IMF. Additionally, qualitative methods and limited case studies are employed, with the WHO as the primary focus, to criti-

cally evaluate the capacity, limitations, and multiple pressures within global health governance and the various forms of cooperation that occur. The study also examines the achievements and challenges faced by these global and regional organisations within the broader context of the global order.

The paper is organised into several themes, beginning with an introduction. This section includes important conceptual clarifications, defining global governance, unpacking the nature and types of IOs, and presents a review of major theoretical perspectives on their behaviour and effectiveness. The next thematic area offers an elaboration on the analysis of the three key universal IOs, which include the UN, WTO, and IMF. It also critically examines their mandates, structures, core functions, significant challenges they encounter, and their specific achievements. This is followed by a section that explicates the increasing role of regional organisations, analyses their diverse models, their relationships with universal IOs, the role of the European Union as a regional organisation, and their contributions and limitations within the context of global governance. The next theme presents a detailed analysis of the main case study, which examines the WHO's purpose, its actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the broader lessons this crisis offers for future global health governance and multilateralism. The final section synthesises the findings, reflects on the enduring challenges faced by IOs, considers prospects for reform, and explores the future pathway of global governance in an increasingly fragmented yet interdependent world.

Global governance encompasses the collective efforts of institutions, norms, processes, and actors aimed at managing transnational issues in the absence of a global government. It mirrors a system of rule-making and coordination that is polycentric and non-hierarchical in a broad sense. As James Rosenau highlighted, governance without government refers to the way transnational affairs are harmonised across multiple levels through networks of actors, which range from states to international organisations (IOs), corporations, and civil society [66]. These systems develop to address complex collective action problems, including pandemics, climate change, and cyber threats, where individual state responses are insufficient.

Global governance is defined as the enactment and enforcement of rules by international institutions (Finkelstein, 2016). However, this minimalist view underestimates the normative and informal approaches highlighted in current literature. The concept is broadly understood to encompass both formal institutions, such as the United Nations, and informal actors, including epistemic communities and multinational support networks [6]. Hofius (2024) emphasises this framework through the use of "pragmatic constructivism" to illustrate how governance also develops through international practices and learning. He then argues that legitimacy is gradually created through procedural inclusivity and reflexivity rather than solely legal authority [42].

The key governance functions include setting agendas, establishing norms, creating rules, implementing policies, monitoring compliance, and making decisions. These functions are not monopolised by states, as non-state actors also actively shape and enforce the rules of international engagement. This variety of actors and functions renders global governance fundamentally fragmented but also potentially adaptable.

International organisations, on the other hand, refer to formal entities created by states through the signing of treaties to address collective interests. They are identified and categorised by their membership (intergovernmental vs. non-governmental), scope (universal vs. regional), and functional perspective (security, trade, health, etc.). IGOs, such as the UN or WTO, are characterized by legal personality, structured decision-making bodies, and a permanent secretariat. INGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières influence the diffusion of norms and policy but do not have formal treaty-based authority.

Pevehouse et al. (2020) emphasise that IOs derive their mandate from delegated state sovereignty, yet they operate with varying degrees of autonomy. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal (2001) also argue that institutional design reflects the functional needs of cooperation, such as enforceability, flexibility, and information sharing. Abbott and Snidal (1998) further highlight that IOs are the leading actors responsible for reducing transaction costs to ensure credible commitments and managing regional enforcement.

Recent scholars also emphasise the distinct and unique identity of IOs. Holzscheiter et al. (2024) introduce the concept of "IO positioning" as a means of tracking how organisations position themselves in response to the complex nature of regimes, particularly in global health governance. Their evidential work demonstrates how inter-IO negotiations shape institutional roles and redefine the boundaries of policy fields by controlling not just what IOs do, but also how they are perceived [43].

2. Theoretical Frameworks

This theoretical expansion demonstrates a shift from viewing IOs merely as instruments of state preferences to recognising them as semi-autonomous actors embedded in social and political structures. The analysis of the behaviour and influence of IOs has been conducted through the lens of various theoretical approaches.

Principal-Agent Theory views IOs as principal actors of states responsible for executing delegated functions. However, agency slack can occur when IOs pursue their own interests, which are mainly shaped by internal bureaucracies and path dependencies [38]. Gutner (2017) argues that IOs are often faced with a "dual accountability" challenge, which links their responsibility to member states with their normative directives and reputational concerns.

Rationalist theories, which include functionalism and

neofunctionalism, suggest that IOs emerge with the purpose of resolving technical challenges and indicate that successful cooperation in one area can extend to others. However, these models underestimate the importance of power irregularities and norms.

Realist critiques remain sceptical of IO independence, viewing them as arenas where powerful states assert influence. From this perspective, IOS demonstrates that dominant power structures serve as tools to maintain supremacy.

Conversely, constructivist ideologies, particularly those established by Barnett and Finnemore (2004), argue that IOs are not only rule followers but also norm entrepreneurs and socialisers. They generate meaning, transform state interests, and spread norms through administrative culture and specialised expertise. Hofius (2024) agrees with this idea by adding a pragmatic dimension and emphasises the emerging, significant role of IOs in practising and rebuilding global norms [43].

Bureaucratic politics and organisational sociology also provide clear insights. IOs mainly reflect path-dependent structures where internal practices and organisational interests influence behaviour, which sometimes do not even align with external mandates [9].

2.1. The Evolving Landscape of Global Governance

Global governance in these modern times represents a complex and often contradictory system of international cooperation and conflict management. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent through trade, technology, and multinational challenges, the institutions intended to manage this interdependence, primarily the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), face unprecedented pressures to adapt. These organizations, which emerged predominantly from the ruins of World War II and were shaped by Cold War dynamics, now operate in a basically different geopolitical environment categorized by multipolarity, increased nationalism, and new cybersecurity threats.

The new global governance system is a clear indication of what scholars have described as "organized hypocrisy" [80]. It is on this note that the question of multidimensional cooperation often conflicts with the reality that states pursue their own self-interest. The pressures arising from this have become crucial in recent years, as great power competition between the United States and China is transforming international relations. The acceleration of climate change and digital transformation also creates new regulatory challenges. It is against this backdrop that the traditional foundations of global governance must strive to enhance their core mandates and adapt to twenty-first-century realities [13].

This paper, therefore, provides a detailed examination of these three core institutions, analysing their structures, functions, and contemporary challenges in the performance of

their daily activities. This study posits that while these organisations continue to be relevant to international stability, their effectiveness is significantly restricted by structural limitations, political fragmentation, and competing visions of world order. The analysis begins with the United Nations as the primary framework for maintaining international peace and security. It then extends to the WTO's role in governing global trade. It concludes with the IMF's primary function in maintaining and sustaining financial stability, with particular attention to how each institution responds to or fails to respond to recent global challenges.

2.1.1. The United Nations (UN): Perceived Roles and Challenges

The United Nations, inaugurated in 1945, is the most ambitious global organization for peace and international cooperation. Its institutional structure, based on the Security Council and General Assembly, reflects both the hopes of the post-war period, as well as the realities of great power politics [78]. The UN has been significant in maintaining international order in part as a result of peacekeeping efforts that have shifted from observer missions of limited scope to full-scale multidimensional operations. The UN and its bodies have also been a significant agent in the promotion of human rights through the Human Rights Council and processes like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) [56]. However, the UN faces major challenges, which often include the failure of the Security Council to act in a more meaningful way due to the veto power of permanent members. There are many other ongoing challenges stemming from the lack of any enforceable process for General Assembly resolutions, allegations of misconduct by persons working as peacekeepers, and the politicization of human rights forums. Continued concern has resulted in calls for major reform, and an enlargement of the Security Council to reflect the current global order, and calls for more decisiveness regarding needed change articulated in "Our Common Agenda".

2.1.2. Structural Foundations, Roles, and Challenges of the UN

The United Nations, as an international organisation, was established in 1945 and represents the most determined attempt in human history to create a worldwide organisation for the maintenance of peace and the promotion of international cooperation. Its institutional framework reflects both the aspirations of the post-war period and the political realities of great power politics. The Security Council, with its five permanent members (P5), which hold the veto power, is still regarded as the most powerful body for issues concerning international peace and security. At the same time, the General Assembly provides a platform for deliberation and norm-setting. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) directs the work of numerous specialized agencies, funds, and programs that address issues ranging from public health

to refugee protection [80].

The UN has made significant strides in recent years, but it has also faced numerous challenges in fulfilling its responsibilities. The Security Council's inability to strategically respond to crises in Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza has highlighted the challenges imposed by the veto power. Russia's persistent use of its veto to block action on Syria, which includes measures to control chemical weapons attacks, has been highly contentious [4]. Although the General Assembly's resolutions are characteristically important, they often lack enforcement mechanisms, which could lead to what some scholars refer to as "declaratory multilateralism".

Several significant UN agencies have played important roles in global governance, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The control of the COVID-19 pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO), for example, highlighted both the importance of global health governance and the challenges it faces. While the WHO provided significant technical guidance and harmonised vaccine distribution through COVAX, its early mistakes in evaluating the severity of the pandemic and the initial lack of transparency from China destroyed its credibility [26]. Similarly, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) faces unprecedented challenges as multinational displacement reaches record levels, with funding failing to keep pace with the growing needs.

One of the significant and resource-intensive activities of the UN is peacekeeping and conflict prevention. Over 70 operations have been conducted since 1948, with approximately 90,000 personnel currently deployed across 12 missions [11]. Contemporary peacekeeping operations have evolved significantly from their traditional observer missions to complex, multidimensional operations that utilize all security apparatus, including military, police, and civilian components. Missions like the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Mali and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo operate in war-torn environments that face irregular threats from armed groups in an attempt to support political processes and protect civilians [6].

However, these missions gradually challenge what scholars describe as the "robustness paradox" [50]. On the one hand, peacekeepers are expected to take firm measures to protect civilians. Such actions risk compromising their perceived neutrality and making them party to conflicts. The 2020 Independent Strategic Review of peacekeeping declared that missions are often given impractical mandates without sufficient resources or political support from member states. In addition, there have been several allegations of sexual manipulation and abuse by peacekeepers, which have cost the UN's reputation and effectiveness dearly.

The UN's conflict prevention capabilities have also been subject to intense scrutiny. Although the organisation has developed sophisticated primary warning systems and inter-

vention tools, preventive action is primarily hindered by political challenges. The case of Ethiopia's Tigray conflict (2020-2022) clearly illustrates this dynamic, where early signs of potential violence were not effectively translated into preventive diplomacy. The Secretary-General's 2021 report, "Our Common Agenda," emphasised the need to strengthen prevention, but structural barriers persist, including member states' reluctance to perceive interference in their domestic affairs.

The UN also plays a vital role in safeguarding human rights and promoting sustainable development. Its human rights machinery has grown significantly since the Human Rights Council was established in 2006, replacing the Commission on Human Rights. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) system exemplifies an innovative peer-review process that has become a key part of the human rights agenda for every member state. Nevertheless, the system remains vulnerable to politicisation, with regional blocs often protecting their members from scrutiny [45]. The recent withdrawals of the United States (2018) and Russia (2023) from the Council at different times highlight these ongoing tensions.

The UN, through the efforts of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced in 2015 as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals, implements comprehensive measures to tackle global inequalities. The 17 goals and 169 targets address issues ranging from poverty alleviation to climate action. Halfway through the 2030 Agenda, progress has been uneven. Although extreme poverty rates have declined in many regions, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed years of progress and pushed an estimated 100 million people back into extreme poverty [77]. The impacts of climate change also extend beyond mitigation efforts, and inequality, both within and between countries, continues unchecked.

The achievement of the SDGs has become increasingly urgent as it faces significant financial challenges. Estimates indicate that developing countries face an annual gap of \$2.5-3 trillion in SDG financing. The 2022 Transforming Education Summit and the 2023 SDG Summit aimed to renew commitments, but current results remain insufficient. Critics argue that, while the SDG framework is comprehensive, it is simultaneously too broad, with numerous goals and vague objectives, and lacks effective accountability mechanisms [29].

There have been several calls for UN reform that have intensified in recent years, with particular focus on expanding the Security Council and its working methods. The Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform, which have been ongoing since 2009, have made little practical progress due to fundamental disagreements over the criteria for new permanent members and the veto power [78]. The G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) persistently push for permanent seats, while the Uniting for Consensus group, led by Pakistan, Italy, and others, consistently opposes this expansion [57].

The proposal of other reforms aimed at addressing the UN's bureaucratic inefficiencies. The Secretary-General's 2017 reform initiative aimed to rationalize management structures and decentralize decision-making. The 2021 "Our Common Agenda" report projected more decisive changes, including a biennial Summit of the Future to strengthen global governance and a New Agenda for Peace to improve peace and security strategies for modern challenges. Moving forward, the roles of the UN could be seen as what former Secretary-General Kofi Annan described as a 'fork in the road'. It can either adapt to new global realities or risk becoming largely irrelevant in solving the world's most serious challenges. The organisation's ability to manage the pressures from great powers, leverage new technologies for governance, and deliver tangible results will determine its future relevance.

2.1.3. Achievements of the United Nations

One of the notable successes achieved by the UN is the decolonisation of Africa. Through General Assembly Resolution 1514 (1960), the UN provided legal and political support for the pursuit of independence, which allowed over 80 new states to gain sovereignty by 1990 [48]. The peaceful transition of Namibia from South African rule and control (1990), overseen by the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), demonstrated how multidimensional oversight could replace violent struggles for self-determination.

Victories in the field of global health are a remarkable achievement of the UN's technical capabilities. The eradication of Smallpox (1980) saved an estimated 200 million people, while polio cases fell from 350,000 annually in 1988 to just six reported cases in 2023 [85]. The WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2005), adopted by 182 countries, has also reduced global smoking rates by 20%, demonstrating how the UN can influence behavioral change through evidence-based treaties.

The promotion of gender equality encompasses the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which 189 states have ratified as of 2019. Additionally, the UN's advocacy efforts for women have increased female parliamentary representation from 11% in 1995 to 26% today [76]. The HeForShe campaign in 2015 involved men as advocates for gender equality, while the Spotlight Initiative has also significantly reduced femicide rates in Latin America by 20% since 2017.

The UN also launched an environmental consensus that helped prevent many environmental crises in various ways. The Montreal Protocol (1987) helped repair the ozone layer by phasing out nearly 99% of banned substances, and it also prevented approximately 2 million annual cases of skin cancer [25]. The Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, also kept 1.5 °C of warming within reach, with 194 parties presenting climate plans by 2023; however, several implementation problems arose in fossil fuel-dependent economies.

The recognition and winning of Nobel Prizes have defined the impact of the UN. Beyond the 2020 WFP award, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) won twice in 1954 and 1981 simultaneously for refugee protection, while peacekeeping forces also received the prize in 1988. The award to Kofi Annan in 2001 once again emphasised the role of the UN in "organising global solidarity" amidst rising transnational challenges.

2.2. The World Trade Organisation (WTO): Crisis of the Liberal Trading Order

2.2.1. Institutional Foundations, Roles, and Challenges of WTO

The World Trade Organisation, established in 1995 as the centre of the post-Cold War liberal economic order, finds itself at a critical juncture [58]. The WTO, designed to promote global trade rules, settle disputes, and facilitate negotiations, has seen its authority diminish amid rising protectionism, great power rivalry, and fundamental disagreements over the aims of trade governance [40]. The organisation's three main functions, serving as a platform for trade negotiations, administering dispute settlement, and supervising national trade policies, are all facing significant challenges.

One key strength of the WHO is its principle of consensus-based decision-making, which ensures that all members have a voice; however, this principle has been weakened in an era of geopolitical fragmentation. The launch of the Doha Development Round in 2001, with determined goals to address the concerns of developing countries, remains incomplete after more than two decades of negotiations. Member states persistently pursue trade liberalisation through bilateral and regional agreements, as issues such as agricultural subsidies, industrial tariffs, and services trade remain unresolved [61].

The WTO played a significant role in resolving disputes across the political and socio-economic spheres of countries worldwide, but this effort faced several challenges. Perhaps the most visible sign of the WTO's troubles is the deadlock of its Appellate Body, often referred to as the "crown jewel" of the trading system. The United States has refused to make appointments to the seven-member body since 2017, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, citing concerns about judicial overreach and sovereignty [18]. By December 2019, the Appellate Body had become ineffective, leaving the dispute settlement system unable to issue final rulings on appeals. This crisis has serious consequences for the rules-based trading system. Losing parties may subsequently receive unfavourable rulings, especially when there is no functioning appeals process. While members have established an interim appeal arbitration arrangement, known as the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), participation remains limited, with major economies such as the United States and China opting not to join. Con-

sequently, the system remains fractured, with powerful countries increasingly adopting unilateral measures that fall outside the WTO rules [21].

Contemporary trade governance faces challenges that were barely anticipated when the WTO was established, especially with digital trade involving cross-border data flows and e-commerce, which pose new regulatory issues. In 2019, 86 member states launched the Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce, resulting in the creation of entirely new rules in this sector, despite being deeply divided on issues such as data localization and digital taxation. Similarly, the link between trade and environmental sustainability has become central, sparking debates over the adjustment of carbon border measures, fossil fuel subsidies, and green industrial policies. The United States and China have repeatedly clashed over industrial policy, exemplified by the Inflation Reduction Act (2022) and the CHIPS Act, which offer substantial subsidies for domestic clean energy and semiconductor industries, drawing criticism from trade partners over perceived unfair measures. Meanwhile, China's state-led economic model continues to challenge WTO rules on subsidies and state-owned enterprises (SOEs), with little consensus among members on how to address these issues [87].

Aside from the numerous challenges it faces, the WTO has achieved some significant successes in recent years by implementing trade reforms tailored to current circumstances. The Ministerial Conference (MC12) in 2022 reached agreements on fisheries subsidies, marking the first international trade deal aimed at environmental sustainability and a partial reduction of intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines. Although limited in scope, these outcomes demonstrated that the organisation can still deliver results in areas of shared interest [18]. There was a rise in discussions about reforms, focusing on three main areas: restoring a functional dispute settlement system, updating trade rules to address contemporary challenges, and improving the organisation's deliberative functions. The Walker Principles on dispute settlement reform, introduced in 2022, aim to bridge the differences between the United States and other members; however, fundamental disagreements persist regarding the optimal balance between legal adjudication and diplomatic resolution of trade disputes [23]. Moving forward, the WTO faces what Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has called an "existential moment." The organisation must either risk becoming increasingly fragile in global trade governance or adapt to new economic realities. Its ability to address trade issues such as digital trade, climate change, and industrial policy, while upholding core principles of non-discrimination and transparency, will determine its future relevance.

2.2.2. Achievements of the WTO

The most important achievement of the WTO is the expansion of global trade. This has led to a significant increase from \$5 trillion in 1995 to over \$25 trillion today (World

Bank, 2023). This growth resulted from the usual reductions in tariffs, from 26% to 9% and below for developing countries, and exactly 5% for developed ones (WTO, 2023). The expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) in 2015 resulted in the removal of tariffs on \$1.3 trillion worth of tech products, thereby boosting the digital economy [26].

The legacy of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) remains significant despite current challenges. Between 1995 and 2019, compliance with rulings exceeded 90%, which included cases involving sensitivities such as the EU's ban on hormone-treated beef [22]. These strategies, with strict timelines, expert panels, and retaliation authorisation, fostered notable predictability in trade relations. Even today, countries continue to report new disputes, demonstrating strong confidence in the system [18].

The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) exemplifies the success of multilateralism, initiated by the efforts of the WTO [8]. The TFA has shortened trade times by 1.5 days and reduced transaction costs by 14.5% globally through the standardisation of customs procedures [60]. Least-developed countries (LDCs) have also gained significant benefits. Implementation by Bangladesh reduced border compliance times from 144 to 58 hours. The TFA also introduced "flexible multilateralism," which allowed members to implement their own timelines and schedules.

In terms of promoting public health, the WTO expanded its roles to include facilitating access to medicines through the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health in 2001. This led to the compulsory licensing of HIV/AIDS drugs and a reduction in treatment costs from \$10,000 to less than \$100 per patient annually [40]. The COVID-19 vaccine waiver in 2022, although limited, established a pattern for future health crises [30].

Finally, the WTO has demonstrated flexibility through the introduction of new agreements. The Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, signed in 2022, was the first WTO pact to prioritise environmental sustainability, removing subsidies for illegal fishing and overfished stocks [40]. Meanwhile, the ongoing Investment Facilitation for Development initiative highlights the ongoing importance of issues related to modern trade.

2.3. The International Monetary Fund (IMF): Navigating Financial Turbulence

2.3.1. Institutional Foundations, Roles, and Challenges of WTO

The International Monetary Fund has experienced significant development since its establishment at Bretton Woods in 1944 [3]. Its formation was founded on providing financial support to nations during times of crisis. The IMF, established initially to oversee the fixed exchange rate system and provide short-term balance of payments financing, has

largely adapted its role to meet the evolving global financial landscape [18]. In the post-Bretton Woods era of fluctuating exchange rates, the Fund shifted its focus to debt crises in developing countries, economies in transition after the Cold War, and, more recently, financial stability and pandemic response worldwide. The IMF's governance structure, based on quota shares that determine both financial contributions and voting power, has remained a persistent challenge [12]. Although reforms in 2010 and 2016 increased the shares of emerging markets, such as China, the United States still holds the de facto veto power over key decisions requiring 85% support, with a 16.5% voting share. European countries are disproportionately represented in relation to their economic size, particularly in comparison to their African counterparts [17]. These governance issues undermine the legitimacy of the IMF, particularly as economic influence continues to shift toward Asia.

Another significant role of the IMF is its involvement in shaping financial policies and debates over conditionality. The main instruments of the IMF include surveillance through Article IV consultations, lending programmes, and technical assistance. Over time, surveillance has expanded to cover issues such as financial sector stability, climate risks, and governance. However, it has faced criticism for being unevenly applied, with greater scrutiny given to developing countries than to advanced economies whose policies may have systemic effects [30]. The IMF's lending programmes continue to face challenges, particularly regarding conditionality. Although the Fund has moved away from the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s that promoted broad economic liberalisation, conditions attached to loans remain problematic. The case of Greece (2010-2018) illustrates how strict measures can exacerbate economic contractions and social suffering [74]. More recent programmes for Argentina (2018) and Egypt (2023) have called for increased flexibility. However, the fundamental tension between creditors' demands for repayment and the needs of debtor countries requires persistently growth-oriented policies. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted unprecedented policy responses from the IMF. Between 2020 and 2022, the Fund provided over \$170 billion in funds to ninety countries through rapid-disbursing emergency facilities with limited conditionality [47]. Additionally, the IMF allocated \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the largest allocation of funds in history, to bolster global liquidity. However, the distribution of SDRs largely followed quota shares, meaning that advanced economies received a larger portion of the funds compared to developing countries. This clearly highlights ongoing inequalities in governance.

There have been calls for a continuation of IMF governance reforms, focusing on the readjustment of quotas, board representation, and leadership selection. The 16th General Quota Review, delayed due to the pandemic, is now underway, with completion expected in 2025. Early discussions suggest reasonable increases for China and other growing

markets, yet there is strong resistance from Europe to limiting its overrepresentation [76]. The future role of the IMF will likely depend on its ability to balance various competing demands, including maintaining macroeconomic stability by supporting growth and development, respecting national policy autonomy through necessary reforms, and addressing new challenges such as climate change, all while focusing on its core mandate. The IMF operates in an environment where multilateral solutions are increasingly challenged by national interests and geopolitical competition, similar to the UN and WTO.

2.3.2. New Challenges: Debt, Climate, and Digital Money

There are three major problems confronting the IMF now: a rising debt crisis, worsening climate conditions, and the increase in digital currencies. Firstly, a growing global debt crisis has emerged over time, affecting more than 60% of low-income countries. In 2020, the G20 established a Common Framework for Debt Treatments to manage debt reform for poor nations. However, this has produced limited results, with only a few cases processed years after their occurrence. The IMF's role in analysing debt sustainability and program design has been scrutinized, especially regarding its interactions with major creditors, such as China, and private bondholders [44].

Additionally, climate change has become a problem for both macroeconomic stability and raises questions about the appropriate role of the IMF. The Fund claims to have integrated climate considerations into its work. This is reflected in climate stress tests in Financial Sector Assessment Programmes (FSAPs) and the new Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST), which provides low-interest financing for long-term climate reforms. However, the RST remains underfunded, with only about \$40 billion in pledges, which is a small amount compared to the needs. Some critics argue that climate issues expand the IMF's core mandate [14].

Moreover, the rise of digital currencies, including both private ones like cryptocurrencies and public ones such as central bank digital currencies, poses threats to monetary policy and financial stability that the IMF seeks to address. The Fund has become a primary platform for international coordination on crypto regulation, as evidenced by the publication of a "Synthesis Paper" with the Financial Stability Board in 2023; however, the standards it establishes globally remain under development (IMF, 2023).

2.3.3. Achievements of the IMF

The IMF has made significant strides in its efforts to promote global economic stability. It provided emergency funding to most economies during the 2008 financial crisis, which prevented deeper declines and restored market confidence [55]. Its rapid response helped stabilise countries like Greece, Ireland, and Portugal through the IMF's immediate

intervention, regardless of the contentious austerity measures attached.

Another significant achievement of the IMF is its role in debt relief for low-income countries. This has been achieved through initiatives such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme and the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT), which have all contributed to reducing debt burdens and allowing nations to allocate resources towards poverty alleviation and healthcare promotion [47]. The IMF distributed over \$100 billion in emergency financing during the COVID-19 pandemic to help fragile economies manage the crisis [32].

The achievements of the IMF cannot be highlighted without discussing the improvements in transparency and governance. It has enhanced its debt sustainability frameworks

and increased monitoring of public expenditure to help curb corruption, if not eradicate it entirely (Gelos & Sahay, 2019). Additionally, the establishment of the Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST) in 2022 marked a significant step towards addressing long-term challenges, such as climate change, by providing affordable financing for green transitions [47].

Moreover, the research and policy analysis conducted by the IMF remained crucial for enhancing global economic discourse. Policymakers and academics frequently cite the World Economic Outlook and Global Financial Stability Reports to provide relevant insights into macroeconomic trends [14]. The IMF, however, continues to play a vital role in the global financial structure through the strengthening of international cooperation and crisis remediation.

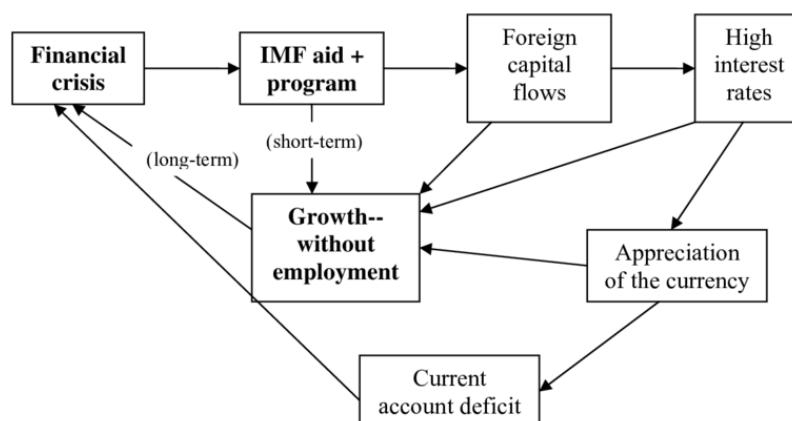


Figure 1. The IMF Intervention Cycle: Financial Crisis, Aid, and Risk of “Growth Without Employment”.

In summary, while IMF programs may provide short-term stabilization of a financial crisis (temporal stability), the critical view depicted by the diagram suggests that they may lead to the type of exclusionary economic recovery (growth with no jobs) associated with their attendant policies (e.g. living with high interest rates, austerity measures, currency appreciation) and, again paradoxically, place the foundations for future financial instability by creating unsustainable imbalances, such as a current account deficit.

2.4. Governance Reform and Future Direction

The United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) remain vital pillars of global governance. However, all three face significant challenges to their effectiveness and legitimacy in fulfilling their respective roles. These challenges stem from both external geopolitical shifts and internal structural limitations that have become evident in recent times [72]. It is, however, paradoxical for the UN to simultaneously fail in its efforts to address matters related to international peace and security. Despite the absence of reliable ways to guarantee

multilateral diplomacy and norm-setting, the organization's capacity to prevent or resolve conflicts is significantly weakened by great power politics and structural rigidities [80].

Post-war prosperity has been boosted by the rules-based trading system, which now faces limitations due to resurgent industrial policies, geopolitical rivalry, and doubts about the fairness of globalisation's distribution efforts [40]. In effect, the WTO faces several challenges, exerting significant pressure on the global economic order. The dispute settlement system has proved ineffective as a key enforcement mechanism, especially when it is most needed to manage significant power trade tensions [18]. While recent agreements on fisheries subsidies and pandemic response demonstrate that the organisation can still achieve results, fundamental questions persist regarding its capacity to tackle twenty-first-century trade issues [23].

The IMF has proven to be highly adaptable, which has expanded its role in providing solutions to problems and addressing new challenges, such as climate change and the adoption of digital currencies [32]. Nevertheless, the governance structure of the IMF hinders its response to evolving

economic realities, and its policy measures continue to pose challenges, particularly in developing countries [74]. The debt crisis now acts both as a constraint on the IMF's crisis management capabilities and as an opportunity to demonstrate its ongoing relevance [65].

Many cross-cutting issues emerge from this analysis. First and foremost, all three institutions face legitimacy shortfalls that stem from governance structures no longer reflecting the distribution of global powers [49]. Additionally, they struggle to balance universal membership with practical decision-making, especially during periods of heightened geopolitical tensions [46]. Third, each organisation must consider how far it can expand its mandate to address new challenges, focusing particularly on climate change and digital governance within the scope of its primary functions [36].

The pathway for global governance primarily involves institutional reform and new forms of flexible cooperation. Incremental changes, such as reforms to the Security Council's working methods [56], the restoration of WTO dispute settlement mechanisms [24], and adjustments to IMF quotas, may help improve its effectiveness. However, more substantial reforms might be necessary to address democratic issues and adapt to new global challenges [2]. Simultaneously, 'minilateral' strategies that convene major stakeholders on pertinent issues could bolster the role of universal organisations [61].

Admittedly, the future of global governance heavily relies on whether states, preeminent powers, see enough value in maintaining and reforming multilateral institutions rather than pursuing unilateral or bloc-based approaches [4]. The need for practical international cooperation has never been more crucial, even as the current moment presents significant challenges [71]. Despite all its shortcomings, the UN, WTO, and IMF remain our best hope for finding solutions to shared global problems in a highly fragmented world [59].

2.4.1. The Regional Dimension: Complementing or Competing with Global Governance

The modern international system presents a complex approach to governance, where regional organisations have emerged as key players alongside traditional global institutions. This development has sparked vigorous scholarly debate about whether regionalism strengthens or weakens the existing world order [2]. Over the past decade, there has been an extraordinary expansion in both the scope and influence of regional organisations, with their activities now promoting security, economic integration, human rights protection, and environmental governance.

The increasing significance of regional organisations demonstrates substantial structural shifts in international relations. As global institutions face criticism for being either too inflexible or insufficiently representative, regional bodies have endeavoured to offer thorough solutions to address governance challenges [45]. The European Union's comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, encompassing

vaccine procurement and economic recovery across its member states, exemplifies the benefits of regional coordination [35]. Similarly, the African Union's resolution of regional conflicts through its Peace and Security Council showcases how regional expertise can lead to more context-sensitive interventions than global strategies [25]. These instances underscore the importance of moving beyond the binary view of regionalism versus globalism and instead examining their dynamic interrelationship across various policy domains.

2.4.2. Rationale for Regional Organisations

The widespread growth of regional organisations in the post-Cold War era arises from multiple, yet overlapping motivations that reveal much about the needs of modern governance. Geographic proximity remains the most important principle for organizing, creating natural constituencies for cooperation on international issues [2]. The patterns of climate change, migratory flows, and public health threats follow regional rather than global outlines, which makes regional organisations the optimal level for policy responses [16]. The Mekong River Commission's management of water resources among Southeast Asian nations demonstrates how shared environmental challenges can encourage institutionalised regional cooperation.

Cultural and historical networks provide influential foundations for regional institution-building. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has significantly influenced centuries of intra-regional exchange, promoting its distinctive "ASEAN Way" of consensus-based decision-making [35]. This approach, which emphasises informal diplomacy and non-interference, reflects deeply ingrained cultural preferences that would be difficult to replicate at the global level [25]. Similarly, the institutional structure of the African Union is centered on pan-African solidarity, rooted in shared experiences of colonialism and the struggle for complete liberation, which enables it to address territorial issues with exclusive legitimacy [2].

Regional integration has also been driven in some clear ways across various economic areas through functional considerations [27]. The development of the European Union from a coal and steel community to a comprehensive political and economic union demonstrates how effective cooperation in one sector creates pressure for expansion into other areas [16]. This "spillover" effect has become a symbol of deep regional integration, with the EU's single market requiring policy coordination on everything from product standards to banking regulations. Recently, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has demonstrated how functional reasoning can promote integration, even in regions with weaker institutional traditions [35].

There is a growing trend towards regionalism due to dissatisfaction with global governance structures. Many states view several universal institutions as being reactive to regional agitators or dominated by super-powerful states [25].

The establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as an alternative security framework for Eurasian states exemplifies this dynamic, as does the creation of regional trade agreements, which provide states with opportunities to develop integration beyond what is achievable in global trade negotiations [2]. These developments suggest that regional organizations often emerge not only to balance global governance but also to address apparent imbalances within it [16].

2.4.3. Diversity of Regional Models

The institutional framework of regional organisations exhibits significant discrepancies that reflect the unique historical paths and political economies of different states worldwide. Security-focused organisations have established specialised structures centred on threats to their members. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) maintains its status as the strongest collective defence arrangement globally, with integrated command structures and advanced interoperability among member forces [35]. However, even in the pursuit of security, various models have emerged, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's comprehensive strategy, which links military stability with human rights, economic protection, and cooperation [25]. The African Union's pillars of peace and security present perhaps the most innovative regional model, incorporating early warning systems, standby military brigades, and functional mediation units that highlight the complex security environment of the continent [2].

There is a revelation of diversification in institutional ambition and design through the integration of economic projects. The European Union stands out as the undeniable benchmark for greater economic integration, which has evolved not only into a single market but also into a monetary union. It increasingly promotes fiscal policies [16]. On the other hand, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum functions as a substantive consultative body without binding principles or strategies for resolving disputes. Amid these various institutions, several hybrid paradigms exist, including the customs union of the Eurasian Economic Union. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership's high-standard trade rules make the AFCFTA a determined and consistently developing framework for integration [35].

Hybrid organisations, known for their combination of multiple governance functions, offer very interesting cases for analysis. The Organisation of American States integrates the promotion of democracy, the protection of human rights, and the enhancement of security within a single institutional framework [25]. The African Union has also expanded from its primary goal of preventing conflict to include economic integration and development agendas [2]. These multifunctional organisations highlight the growing recognition that traditional policy measures often impede effective solutions to complex international challenges [16].

There is a growing variation in how institutions approach decision-making processes and legal authority. The supernatural aspects of the European Union, which include the European Commission's agenda-setting power and the European Court of Justice's binding authority, exemplify one extreme. Conversely, organisations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) rely entirely on intergovernmental agreements, which grant each member state active veto power [35]. Several regional bodies occupy intermediate positions and develop innovative governance strategies that balance efficiency with sovereignty concerns, such as ASEAN's "minus X" formula, which facilitates smooth participation in economic commitments.

2.4.4. Roles in Global Governance

Regional organisations have established measures and frameworks for global governance systems that extend well beyond merely fulfilling roles. As significant entities, they often incorporate international standards into regional contexts, adding innovative provisions. The Inter-American human rights system has developed and elaborated on international human rights laws, providing excellent protections for local populations and migrants [2]. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights has also introduced principles of collective rights that were absent from the universal human rights instruments [16]. These regional innovations typically influence international standards through repeated cycles of norm development and refinement.

Regional organisations consistently act as force multipliers for their members during international policy negotiations [31]. The collective representation of the European Union in discussions on climate change and trade negotiations affords individual member states greater influence than they could achieve independently [35]. Similarly, the African Union has enhanced the bargaining power of its members by presenting a united front on issues ranging from pandemic resolutions to sustainable development [25]. This coordinating role has become increasingly important as global governance forums become more complex, enabling smaller states to overcome capacity challenges and voice their perspectives on various regional matters [2].

Regional organisations also play a vital role in shaping global governance systems. The interpretation and adaptation of global norms for regional audiences can help ensure compliance and implementation among regional bodies [16]. The declaration of human rights within the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) strategically balances universal principles with regional particularities, making discussions about human rights more acceptable to member state governments. Conversely, regional organisations sometimes hinder the diffusion of global norms when they perceive disparities with local values, as seen in the approaches of some Middle Eastern and Asian countries to women's rights and freedom of expression [35].

Regional organisations offer distinct advantages over

global institutions in conflict management. Their proximity to conflicts provides greater situational awareness and quicker response capabilities [25]. The Economic Community of West African States' interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone clearly demonstrate how regional actors can deploy forces more swiftly and with better cultural understanding than UN peacekeepers, who are much farther away [2]. Furthermore, regional organisations tend to maintain ongoing political relationships with conflict parties, which supports more sustained mediation efforts compared to sporadic global interventions [16].

2.4.5. Challenges Facing Regional Organisations

Despite their significant roles, regional organisations face ongoing structural challenges that hinder their effectiveness in governance. Proliferation and overlap have created confusing institutional landscapes in some regions. The governance structure of Africa includes the African Union, eight recognised regional economic communities, and several sub-regional bodies with partially shared memberships and mandates. This complexity leads to coordination problems and turf wars, such as the rivalry between ECOWAS and the AU over crisis resolution in West Africa [35]. In contrast, the challenges in Europe are quite different. For example, the expansion of the EU's competencies increasingly intersects with those of organisations like the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe [25].

Resource limitations remain a significant obstacle for most regional organisations, especially in the Global South. While the EU possesses substantial budgetary resources and technical expertise, organisations like the Pacific Islands Forum operate with over-stretched staff and limited funding [2]. The African Union's increasing financial reliance on external donors, who contribute over 60% of its program budget, undermines its sovereignty and long-term sustainability [16]. These differences reflect broader global disparities and result in unequal capacities for regional governance across various regions worldwide.

Another demeaning challenge is political divisions among member states, which consistently undermine regional organisations at critical moments. The Gulf Cooperation Council was openly dismantled during the Qatar blockade from 2017 to 2021, illustrating how geopolitical rivalries can impede regional solidarity [35]. In South Asia, ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan have rendered SAARC virtually non-functional, with summit meetings repeatedly postponed [25]. Even relatively successful organisations, such as ASEAN, face numerous challenges in maintaining consensus as great power competition intensifies in the Indo-Pacific [2].

Once again, a backlash concerning regional governance involves democratic discrepancies. The decision-making processes in most regional organisations tend to favour the executive branches, which restricts the activities of national

parliaments and civil society [16]. The EU has made notable progress in addressing its democratic issues through granting parliamentary powers and adopting participatory strategies. However, similar reforms have proven ineffective in specific regions or organisations. Many regional organisations lack transparent decision-making processes and effective accountability measures, resulting in heightened perceptions of exclusivity and a disconnect from the public sphere [35].

It is clear that within the same organisation, effectiveness in resolving issues varies across different issues. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has achieved significant success in economic cooperation, but it persistently fails to address human rights violations or prevent territorial disputes among its members [25]. Similarly, the Organisation of American States has been more effective in monitoring elections than in fighting corruption or organised crime [2]. These inconsistent performances reveal political bias and the tendency of member states to empower regional organisations only in areas that serve their national interests [16].

The relationship between regional organisations and global governance highlights one of the most distinctive features of modern international relations. Beyond serving as stepping stones or stumbling blocks to international cooperation, regional organisations have evolved into complex governance actors in their own right. Their ability to balance local ideas with collective action makes them significant in providing solutions to global challenges that cannot be addressed solely by national or universal means [35]. The management of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and global economic instability all demonstrate how regional organisations can offer unique responses and contribute to broader governance systems [25].

The dynamics of regional governance institutions offer important lessons for international cooperation. The use of various approaches, ranging from the formal integration of the EU to ASEAN's flexible regionalism, demonstrates that there are multiple ways to achieve effective collective action [2]. This diversity encourages global governance and permits the experimentation and adaptation of policies to local circumstances [16]. However, it also creates coordination challenges that require innovative boundary-crossing approaches between regional and global institutions.

The three main factors likely to shape the future of regional governance include the existence of multinational challenges, shifts in power dynamics within the international system, and persistent internal pressures for institutional reform [35]. The increasing assertions of regional organisations in the Global South suggest that regionalism will play a significant role in maintaining world order [25]. Additionally, established regional bodies face growing internal challenges, from democratic issues to economic nationalism, which may require significant resolutions [2].

The understanding of regional governance can be deepened through various avenues for future research. The factors that enable practical cooperation could be identified through

comparative studies of regional organisations across different policy areas [16]. The interactions between regional and global boundaries could enhance predictions related to areas such as climate change and global health. Furthermore, research has clearly shown that the mandate of regional organisations can facilitate necessary governance reforms [35].

With the ongoing development of international systems, regional organisations will continue to serve as important spaces for governance innovation and vital bridges linking local and global problem-solving [25]. The capacity of both international and regional organisations to combine the benefits of proximity and solidarity with links to wider governance networks places them in a unique position to address the numerous challenges of the twenty-first century [2]. Instead of viewing regionalism and globalism as competing paradigms, scholars and policymakers should focus on fostering more effective interactions between these complementary levels of governance [16]. Although the resulting multilevel governance structure appears complex, it offers the best hope for resolving the interconnected challenges faced today.

2.5. Roles of the European Union (EU)

The European Union plays a significant role as a global regulatory power, influencing its extensive Single Market to promote international trade through what has been called the "Brussels Effect." International corporations primarily adopt strict EU regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) regulation, as well as environmental standards, as benchmarks for their global operations to maintain access to this lucrative market. This effectively propagates EU rules worldwide without the need for international treaties. The large size of the market, which seeks preferences, and its indivisible nature make acquiescence the most effective approach for global companies [19]. This clearly demonstrates the EU's position as a unique geopolitical entity, whose influence derives more from its market power and regulatory capacity than from traditional military strength.

A core economic role of the EU is to uphold the "four freedoms", which are the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people across the 27 member states. This involves several challenging tasks, such as harmonizing regulations, resolving technical trade barriers, improving mutual understanding of standards, and resisting unfair state aid. The European Commission, as an institution of the EU, diligently defends this market [79]. It does so by initiating measures against member states that, through any means, implement protectionist policies or misapply the Single Market rules. Maintaining the integrity of this market is vital for European competition and prosperity, requiring ongoing adaptation to new technologies and economic developments [64].

The EU is also actively involved in climate control initia-

tives, establishing itself as a leader in global climate action, primarily through the European Green Deal, which aims for climate neutrality by 2050. This involves setting determined, legally binding emission reduction targets for member states through regular initiatives, such as the Fit for 55 packages. It includes the implementation of the world's most extensive carbon pricing system (EU ETS), the promotion of renewable energy sources, and the integration of climate objectives into all policy areas, such as transportation, agriculture, and trade. The EU primarily utilizes its diplomatic and economic influence to promote greater ambitions in international forums, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which leverages its regulatory power and climate finance to establish international standards and practices [70].

Furthermore, the EU also functions as a tool to strengthen democracy and uphold the rule of law. This is outlined in the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which includes core democratic principles such as respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. The EU is treaty-bound to uphold these principles internally, with mechanisms like the Rule of Law Framework and the annual Rule of Law Report ensuring compliance within member states. In response to democratic challenges, the EU has invoked Article 7 of the TEU against Poland and Hungary, linking access to EU funds to adherence to the rule of law through the Conditionality Regulation, while also supporting civil society and media autonomy. However, enforcing these norms against independent member states remains legally and politically complex [51].

Finally, the EU also acts as an external player in foreign policy and security. This is carried out through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which aim for effective action on the international stage [63]. This role involves diplomatic efforts, imposing sanctions (e.g., against Russia, Belarus, Iran), deploying civilian and military missions (e.g., in Bosnia, Somalia, Niger), providing development aid, and promoting international cooperation. Some programmes like the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) seek to enhance defence integration. Although the EU lacks a unified military or the quick decision-making of a nation-state, it also leverages its collective economic strength, normative influence, and soft power to achieve peace, security, and strategic interests worldwide by navigating complex relationships with major powers [73].

2.5.1. Relationships Among International Organizations and Regional Organizations

This relationship involves cooperation and occasional friction, emphasising shared goals in addressing transnational challenges while recognising distinct mandates and regional priorities [54]. International organisations (IOs) typically provide broad frameworks, norms, and resources, whereas regional organisations (ROs) improve contextual under-

standing, facilitate localised implementation, and promote regional ownership. Effective global problem-solving requires this cooperation [14]. According to Chapter VIII of its Charter, the UN has recognized the importance of regional agreements for peace and security, encouraging "networked multilateralism" [68].

The nature of this relationship varies significantly across different functional areas or organisations. There is, however, a collaboration between the UN and regional institutions, including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), aimed at maintaining peace and resolving conflicts among member states in a peaceful manner. The Security Council must always approve all regional measures because the United Nations still retains predominant control [68]. Additionally, there is collaboration between the WHO and regional health initiatives, which emphasises that community engagement and understanding local contexts are crucial in addressing public health issues, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic [84].

Economically, the IMF's engagement with regional organizations is primarily focused on promoting financial viability and fostering sustainable development. Although the IMF operates at the international level, its core activities are predominantly carried out by regional economic federations that aim to boost investment, trade, and the circulation of money within their respective areas (IMF, n.d.). For instance, the IMF provides financial assistance and offers policy advice to support regional integration efforts [69]. However, issues such as joint memberships and the failure to implement provisions within treaties in some regional economic communities can hinder these interactions (IMF, n.d.). The management of the IMF and regional financial strategies is crucial for maintaining an interconnected multinational financial structure, particularly during times of crisis.

In essence, the relationship between major IOs and ROs is a key element that highlights how growing partnerships among these blocs are mainly driven by the realisation that international issues create both universal conditions and localised solutions. As IOs provide a significant global platform for setting norms and mobilising resources, ROs, on the other hand, offer important regional or national understanding, bring regional expertise, and provide a more direct link to the specific needs of member states. To effectively tackle modern issues, ranging from promoting peace and security to economic stability and public health, it is essential to encourage complex international cooperation through improved coordination, information exchange, and effective problem-sharing.

2.5.2. Case Study: The WHO and the COVID-19 Pandemic Response

The COVID-19 pandemic represented the most significant challenge to global health governance since the development of the modern multilateral system. This placed the World

Health Organization (WHO) under intense scrutiny as the organisation responsible for coordinating the international response [34]. As the United Nations' specialized health agency, the WHO was expected to provide authoritative technical guidance, ensure restraint efforts across nations, and promote equitable distribution of medical resources for all states [60]. However, its performance was impeded by controversies regarding the timeliness of its declarations, the consistency of its recommendations, and its capacity to navigate the complex geopolitics surrounding the pandemic response [37]. The crisis occurred during a period marked by rising nationalism and great power rivalry that had already weakened multilateral institutions, creating an extremely challenging environment for international cooperation [55].

The response of the WHO to COVID-19 must be understood within this broader context of deteriorating global governance, where scientific requirements continue to clash with political considerations [53]. This tension is most evident in the organisation's anxious relationship with both China and the United States, as well as in its critical strategy regarding the declaration of a public health emergency [30]. A fair evaluation of WHO's pandemic performance requires scrutiny through multiple analytical lenses, including its structural problems as an intergovernmental organization, its operational capabilities during emergencies, its political vulnerabilities to pressure from member states, and its normative role as the world's leading health authority [34]. Such strategic analysis demonstrates both the vital functions performed by the WHO and the systemic reforms needed to improve global health governance in response to future threats [41].

2.5.3. The WHO: Mandate, Structure, and Pre-Pandemic Challenges

The constitutional provision of the WHO, established in 1948, encompasses normative standard-setting, providing technical assistance to member states, controlling global diseases, and coordinating international health responses [83]. The governance structure of the WHO functions through three main organs: the World Health Assembly (WHA), which sets policy directions in annual meetings involving all member states; the 34-member Executive Board, responsible for implementing decisions; and the Secretariat, headed by the Director-General, which manages daily operations [50]. This tripartite framework was designed to combine technical expertise with political representation. In practice, it has often led to bureaucratic inertia and decision-making difficulties during emergencies due to conflicting national interests [41].

One of the most intriguing structural issues within the WHO may be its financial model. This system relies on voluntary contributions for approximately 80% of its budget, in contrast to the mandatory dues paid by member states [75]. This funding approach has led to significant changes in institutional priorities, as donor countries and private philan-

thropists, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, allocate their contributions to specific diseases or programs rather than supporting the core functions of the WHO [84]. The effects are clearly evident in the years before COVID-19, when budget cuts forced the organisation to reduce its emergency response capabilities just as global health threats were increasing (Wenham, 2021). The Ebola epidemic in West Africa from 2014-2016 served as a stark reminder of this underfunding, as delays and under-resourcing in WHO's response contributed to the loss of many lives [83].

The revision of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), which followed the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), aimed to address these weaknesses by establishing a legally binding framework for reporting and containing outbreaks [26]. Nevertheless, the regulations faced significant setbacks, including poor enforcement procedures, reliance on self-reporting by member states, and the absence of provisions for sanctioning intentional cover-ups of health emergencies [22]. These issues went beyond the considerable differences in national surveillance capacities and the regulations' requirement for substantial evidence before declaring emergencies, which led to delays similar to those experienced during the early COVID-19 outbreak [7]. The inadequacies of the IHR underscore the intense pressures in global health governance, as they balance national sovereignty with the need for collective action against multinational threats [53].

2.5.4. Chronology of WHO Actions During COVID-19

The first notification and publication by the WHO regarding a list of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China, occurred in its Event Information System on 31 December 2019 [83]. This initial notice marked the start of what would become the most severe outbreak response in the organization's seven-decade history, testing every aspect of its technical and political capacity [84]. In the early weeks, the WHO engaged in a subtle diplomatic balancing act, attempting to gather precise epidemiological data from Chinese authorities while avoiding actions that might be seen as limiting China's sovereignty or provoking restrictions on WHO personnel access. This careful approach reflected both the organisation's culture of consensus-based engagement with member states and the pragmatic reality that an effective response required co-operation from the outbreak's origin [15].

The declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020, followed a separate vote by the Emergency Committee and came only after the confirmation of international spread to eighteen countries [83]. Many public health experts believed that this report was several weeks too late to contain significant global transmission, as many nations had already begun imposing travel restrictions contrary to WHO advice. The delay resulted from several factors, including the WHO's cautious institutional culture, the IHR's evidence requirements, and

difficulties in verifying Chinese case data. By then, the pandemic had already spread to 114 countries, following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, by Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, with over 118,000 cases, which demonstrated how the WHO's caution had been overtaken by the realities of the virus [45].

Between 2020 and 2021, the WHO consistently issued updated technical guidelines on testing protocols, treatment options, mask usage, and social distancing measures [20]. These recommendations were regarded as one of the organisation's most significant contributions, providing evidence-based standards for countries with varying levels of public health infrastructure [41]. However, a series of high-profile reversals, particularly regarding the effectiveness of mask use and aerosol transmission, led to public confusion and damaged the organisation's credibility. These discrepancies stemmed from the conservative evidence-assessment protocols of the WHO, which prioritized scientific certainty over timely adaptation to evolving data, a strategy poorly suited to managing a rapidly emerging pandemic [83].

The Solidarity Trials initiative demonstrated the special convening power of the WHO through the establishment of a global framework for coordinated treatment research across numerous countries [84]. This prudent collaboration facilitated the identification of effective therapeutics, such as dexamethasone, and reduced the duplication of clinical trials [83]. However, the initiative's reliance on voluntary data sharing led to problems when some member states delayed or concealed their outbreak statistics, particularly in the early days of the pandemic [85]. These transparency challenges highlighted the limitations of the WHO's soft-power governance approach during a crisis that requires real-time information synthesis [67].

2.5.5. COVAX and the Vaccine Equity Crisis

The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator and its vaccine pillar, COVAX, represented the most determined effort to ensure impartial worldwide distribution of medical remedies [10]. This innovative approach involved shared procurement and financing to serve both wealthy and low-income countries, with the primary goal of delivering 2 billion doses by the end of 2021 [34]. Initially, COVAX aimed to prevent the nationalism that had characterized vaccine allocation in previous pandemics by creating binding commitments for equitable distribution [60]. However, in practice, wealthy nations evaded the system through bilateral deals with pharmaceutical companies and hoarded enough doses to vaccinate their populations on several occasions, while COVAX faced persistent shortages [81].

By the time COVAX began to achieve significant distribution in mid-2021, precarious immunity challenges had already emerged across the Global South, facilitating the development of new variants, such as Delta and Omicron [37]. The mechanism faced numerous systemic gaps, includ-

ing ongoing underfunding, production issues at manufacturing sites in India, and distribution problems in recipient countries [55]. These difficulties revealed fundamental power imbalances in global health, where a small number of wealthy nations and pharmaceutical corporations could set the terms for the rest of the world [53]. The COVAX experience demonstrated both the potential of multidimensional procurement strategies and the significant challenges posed by existing structures of political and economic power [75].

2.6. Geopolitical Pressures and Institutional Independence

The WHO found itself caught between increasing pressures from the United States and China during various phases of the pandemic [30]. In April 2020, the Trump administration announced the suspension of US funding, and the call for withdrawal procedures represented an unprecedented threat, removing the organisation's most significant contributor at the height of the crisis [15]. Multiple claims that the pandemic was "China-centric" forced the WHO's leadership to shift focus from technical coordination to political damage control. However, Chinese pressure delayed the declaration of the PHEIC [22]. These developments exposed the weaknesses of multilateral institutions in the face of great power rivalry and raised important questions about the WHO's capacity to act as a neutral technical authority [26].

Restrictions on travel also became another obstacle, with the WHO initially opposing border closures based on the IHR strategies, which considered such measures ineffective and economically disruptive [7]. When several countries imposed restrictions, the disconnect between WHO's recommendations and state actions highlighted the limited authority of international health regulations in crises, where governments prioritise perceived national interests. This tension between global coordination and national sovereignty persisted throughout the pandemic, affecting issues ranging from vaccine distribution to containment strategies [83].

2.6.1. Assessment of WHO Performance

The WHO demonstrated strong leadership from various perspectives despite systemic limitations [41]. Its technical strategies provided an evidence-based foundation for national responses, especially for countries lacking robust public health infrastructure [20]. The organisation served as the key global centre for developing scientific knowledge and synthesising complex research into practical guidance for policymakers. Initiatives like the Solidarity Trials established collaborative guidelines that supported significant progress while avoiding duplication. The WHO's regular situation reports and data tracking became vital resources for pandemic monitoring, offering comparative statistics where national reporting often lacked consistency or transparency [83]. Perhaps most notably, the organisation acted as a trusted voice contesting misinformation surrounding the pan-

demic, thereby bolstering its technical authority to promote evidence-based practices.

However, these successes were hindered by several significant failures [84]. The delayed PHEIC and pandemic declarations allowed unchecked spread when timely action could have controlled transmission. Uncertain information on key issues, including the effectiveness of masks and transmission methods, created public confusion that persisted throughout the crisis [83]. WHO's communications often appeared more technical and slower to adapt to evolving science, reflecting an institutional culture that prioritised academic precision over effective risk communication. Most critically, the organisation lacked sufficient authority or tools to compel member states to comply with international health regulations, making many of its recommendations largely voluntary [33].

2.6.2. Structural Constraints Exposed

The pandemic exposed the fundamental weaknesses in the institutional design of the WHO [53]. Unlike organisations with obligatory authority, such as the World Trade Organisation, the WHO operates through persuasion rather than enforcement, which renders it powerless when states disapprove of recommendations [86]. Its governance structure grants equal voting power to all member states, regardless of their contributions or capabilities, leading to awkward incentives and decision-making challenges. Issues such as underfunding of core functions, particularly emergency response capacities, left the organisation unprepared, despite years of warnings about pandemic risks [75].

The crisis also revealed ongoing tensions between the normative and operational roles of the WHO [67]. It aimed to ensure scientific consistency through comprehensive evidence reviews, and as an emergency responder, it had to make rapid decisions even when information about the situation was incomplete [41]. This dual role played by the WHO generated institutional disorder, as it often appeared uncertain or reactive rather than proactive and decisive [30]. The organization's decentralized structure, with substantial power delegated to regional offices, further hampered coordinated global action.

2.6.3. Broader Implications for Global Health Governance

The assessment of the post-pandemic period is based on several reform activities [34]. The increase in assessment contributions could reduce donor dependency, thereby generating more expected funding for primary functions [60]. The idea of strengthening the contributions of the IHR through enforceable approaches and independent powers could also prevent future delays in outbreak reporting [26]. The creation of specific measures for emergency situations, which include a trained workforce, pre-negotiated supply contracts, and rapid funding strategies, would address the

special challenges that characterised the COVID-19 response [37]. The proposed Pandemic Treaty demonstrates a determined effort to organise these reforms through clear principles of equity, transparency, and response coordination [53].

Different governance paradigms have emerged in response to the WHO's perceived limitations [86]. Regional initiatives, such as the Africa CDC, and multinational platforms, like the G20, offer balancing mechanisms for coordination. Public-private partnerships, such as CEPI, have fostered innovation in vaccine development, but they also risk weakening the structures of global health [64]. These various functions illustrate both frustration with WHO's challenges and recognition that the pandemic response requires action at multiple levels [81].

The central tension between multilateral cooperation and cost-cutting by nationalist interests will likely alter international health governance for several years [45]. COVID-19 has demonstrated that pandemics can threaten the sovereignty of the WHO, highlighting the importance of strengthening international authority [34]. However, the reluctance of powerful states suggests that any reforms will occur gradually rather than through rapid, revolutionary change [15]. The capacity of the WHO to adapt through reforms in funding, legal frameworks, and leadership will determine whether it remains the backbone of global health or develops into a more fragmented system [55].

The COVID-19 pandemic served as the most challenging stress test for both the WHO and the broader global health governance system [53]. Although the organization fostered a significant scientific alliance and established evidence-based standards, its structural issues, particularly financial instability, political weaknesses, and the absence of enforcement authority, seriously impeded its effectiveness [34]. The crisis highlighted core tensions between national authority and collective action, scientific methods and operational urgency, as well as between equity and power politics [67].

Three main lessons can be derived from reforming global health governance [60]. First, the WHO needs to secure more stable and flexible funding to maintain essential capacities and respond swiftly to emergencies without necessarily waiting for donor approval [75]. Second, international health regulations require strong incentives for compliance and penalties for non-cooperation, including independent verification mechanisms [26]. Lastly, strategies to promote equity, such as COVAX, must be implemented with binding commitments rather than relying solely on voluntary cooperation during crises [81].

The most important value of the WHO depends on functions that no single nation can achieve alone, such as detecting health threats across countries, establishing evidence-based standards, and promoting life-saving interventions to reach all populations regardless of nationality or wealth [33]. COVID-19 revealed both how much the current system has fallen short of these ideals and how urgently the

world desires them to be fulfilled [45]. As the international community works to ensure order after the pandemic, it faces a difficult choice: to invest in stronger, more equitable global health governance or to accept even greater losses when the next crisis unexpectedly occurs [53]. The WHO is not perfect, but it plays an essential role in coordinating the COVID-19 response, which indicates that despite its weaknesses, the solution is not to abandon multilateralism but to strengthen it against future dangers [55].

2.6.4. Reassessing International Organisations in a Fragmented World

The formation of various International Organisations (IOs) has long served as the foundation of global governance, fostering cooperation, helping resolve conflicts, and addressing transnational challenges. However, their effectiveness is now increasingly scrutinised in an era marked by geopolitical fragmentation, rising nationalism, and complex crises that transcend borders. These findings on the role of IOs explore ongoing structural problems and examine potential mechanisms for reform. Drawing on contemporary scholarship [46] and recent policy reports [77], this analysis highlights the irony of IOs being both essential and having significant influence as key actors in global governance. The enduring question remains: Can these institutions adapt to meet the unique challenges of the 21st century?

IOs are considered crucial in addressing global challenges, ranging from climate change to pandemics, but their structural issues persist, often hindering their effectiveness. As Ikenberry (2018) argues, the post-World War II liberal international order, supported by institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), has played a crucial role in maintaining relative global stability. However, the authority of this order is waning due to power imbalances, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a growing gap between global institutions and the populations they serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of International Organisations during such times. Although the World Health Organization (WHO) promoted reasonable scientific collaboration, its slow response and apparent deference to China revealed systemic weaknesses in global health governance [82]. Likewise, initiatives like COVAX, aimed at ensuring equitable vaccine distribution among countries, faced challenges due to vaccine nationalism and funding shortages. These examples underscore a recurring theme: IOs are necessary in theory but often encounter limitations in practice because of structural and political issues.

Global governance faces significant challenges, evidenced by the tension between national sovereignty and the pursuit of supranational cooperation. While international organisations depend on agreement among member-states, this often leads to difficulties when states prioritise short-term national interests over collective solutions. The ongoing paralysis of

the UN Security Council on issues like Syria and Ukraine highlights this problem [62]. The principle of sovereignty, enshrined in the UN Charter, both empowers and limits the effectiveness of international organisations, creating a paradox where states simultaneously advocate for global solutions while safeguarding their autonomous rights.

The institutions of global governance are persistently dominated by Western powers, which fosters perceptions of illegitimacy in the rise of other economies. Acharya (2016) emphasized how institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank reflect mid-20th-century power structures and marginalize the Global South in essential decision-making processes. Although necessary reforms, such as IMF quota adjustments, have been implemented, they have failed to address the core structural disparities. This imbalance creates dissatisfaction and reduces the willingness of rising powers to fully engage with existing strategies, thus further weakening global governance.

Many IOs lack what is called democratic legitimacy, which limits the power they hold. This results in decision-making processes that are often unclear and influenced more by educated elites than by representative bodies [87]. The closed-door negotiations of the WTO and the veto power of the UN Security Council exemplify this issue, highlighting the exclusionary nature of ideas among smaller states and civil society actors. IOs also struggle with public trust, which threatens their long-term viability due to a lack of transparency and inclusivity.

Several IOs face the challenge of underfunding, which diminishes their ability to respond effectively to crises. The WHO, for example, relies heavily on voluntary contributions, leading to unpredictable financing and operational difficulties [39]. Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles slow down institutional responses, as seen in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was delayed. Without clear funding strategies and efficient governance structures, IOs will continue to encounter difficulties in fulfilling their mandates.

The enforcement of IOS' arrangements is often weak, even when international agreements are reached. Climate consensus agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, are notably relevant, but they also lack binding enforcement mechanisms, allowing states to evade commitments without facing significant consequences [77]. Meanwhile, declining public trust in IOs caused by perceptions of incapability and elitism undermines their legitimacy. Without tangible results, these institutions are likely to be viewed as irrelevant by both policymakers and the global public.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper critically analyses the important but challenging role played by IOs, which include the UN, the WHO, and the IMF, in helping to address the rising challenges of the 21st century. The roles undertaken by the IOs

and regional organisations described in the paper, however, demonstrate how these institutions remain essential for promoting global governance. Some of the functions performed by these major institutions include developing norms and providing standard solutions to address transnational problems. Nevertheless, structural deficits arise due to their ineffectiveness, geopolitical tensions, and a growing gap between their directives and the realities of a fragmented world.

The era of the COVID-19 pandemic was seen as a crucial factor in determining the confidence countries placed in their participation in international organisations. However, this pandemic revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of IOs. The WHO, for example, played a vital role in coordinating scientific research and issuing guidelines; however, a delay in its response highlighted political shortcomings that exposed systemic constraints in global health governance. Similarly, initiatives like COVAX also highlighted the problems of unequal international cooperation, as their aims were compromised due to funding limitations and vaccine nationalism. These examples clearly illustrate ongoing issues. Although IOs are theoretically relevant, they are often hampered by practical inconsistencies.

The major problem in global governance lies in the struggle between the necessity of states to enhance international cooperation and the unwillingness of some states to relinquish their sovereignty. The persistent issues faced by the UN Security Council, the challenges the WTO encounters in resolving disputes and economic differences, and the injustice displayed by the IMF regarding governance inequalities reflect this absurdity. The UN Charter effectively establishes the sovereign principles of member states, which then act as a limitation on the effectiveness of international organizations, while also creating a system where states call for global solutions yet prevent the implementation of control measures. This tension is further exacerbated by the uneven influence of Western powers within international organisations, intensifying power politics. Consequently, this diminishes the perceived autonomy of emerging economies and hampers their ability to play a key role in decision-making within these organisations.

The paper critically examines the treacherous financial burdens and lack of democratic sovereignty affecting most IOs. The increasing dependency rate of the WHO on voluntary contributions from states and philanthropists leads to serious financing and operational challenges. At the same time, unclear decision-making processes in institutions like the WTO alienate smaller states and civil society actors. When proper funding strategies are not implemented to enhance transparency and promote more inclusive governance structures, IOs risk losing their relevance and public trust.

Despite all these problems, the call for strong global governance has never been realistic. Challenges such as climate conditions, the emergence of pandemics, financial difficulties, and the lack of technological progress represent weaknesses that require coordinated international responses. This

paper outlines procedures for reform, which involve gradual adjustments within the existing principles of international organisations to improve global governance more fundamentally. Expanding UN Security Council reforms to include members from less powerful countries or increasing funding for the WHO may address some setbacks, but are unlikely to be sufficient for challenges like climate change. A more decisive approach, such as “multiplex multilateralism” or integrating global governance into regional organisations and non-state actors, offers potential solutions but also risks increasing fragmentation.

In essence, it is an undeniable fact that IOs also face numerous challenges; however, they play a crucial role in

maintaining world peace and stability, as well as in resolving shared issues. It is clear that there is a need for global governance to adapt to the realities of a fragmented, multipolar world. The aim of both IOs and Ros is to create an equitable, responsive, and more resilient system, whether through increased reforms, structural adjustments, or a combination of models. The urgency is apparent: nations must either commit to strengthening global institutions or risk rendering them irrelevant amid emerging global crises. The way forward involves calls for strong and transformative leadership, collective effort, and a shift in mindset towards international cooperation in the 21st century.

Abbreviations

IOs	International Organisations
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
POG	Public Policy Documents
P5	Five Permanent Members (of the Security Council)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
G4 nations	Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan
MC12	Ministerial Conference
ITA	Information Technology Agreement
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EU	European Union
MPIA	Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement
SOEs	State-owned Enterprises
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
LDCs	Least-developed Countries
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
AFCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
SDRs	Special Drawing Rights
FSAPs	Financial Sector Assessment Programmes
RST	Resilience and Sustainability Trust
G20	Group of Twenty
WHA	World Health Assembly
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
IHR	International Health Regulations
TEU	Treaty on European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading System
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

SAARC South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
OAS Organisation of American States

Author Contributions

Emmanuel Asumadu Agyemang is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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