

CAF

Report Annual Forum 2025*

The Decline of
International Law:
Impacts on Middle
Powers &
Media Coverage

**10 years
of common
action**

* Anniversary
Edition



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Annual Forum 2025 Collaborators

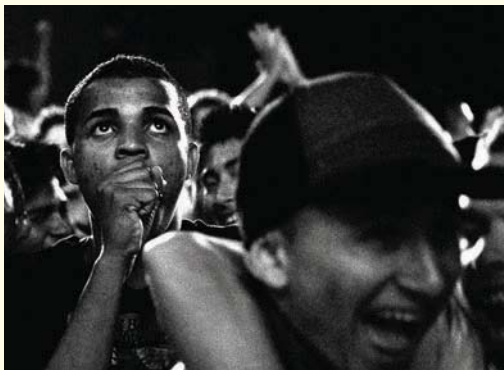


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The decline of International Law:
Impacts on Middle Powers & Media
Coverage

Doha, Qatar | 07 December 2025



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Introduction & Acknowledgments

Under the title “The Decline of International Law: Impacts on Middle Powers and Media Coverage”, CAF2025 was held as part of the broad range of high-level meetings at the Doha Forum in Doha, Qatar, on 07 December 2025. Featuring a condensed and urgent programme of two private sessions, this edition included the participation of renowned experts in international law.

Crucially, the forum examined the erosion of international law and the necessity of reimagining its institutions in the face of a declining unipolar hegemonic order. With a focus on the legitimacy crisis of international architecture and global governance, new technological frontiers, and the potential for non-aligned multilateral action, CAF2025 reflected on strategies for transitioning towards a functional, inclusive global legal system that is truly grounded in the rule of law. These discussions addressed both the **strategic role of middle powers in building regional coalitions**

and the transformative potential of independent journalism in crafting global narratives, as well as its importance in defending truth and justice.

The Common Action Forum 2025 annual forum was made possible through collaboration with our esteemed partners, the **Doha Forum** organising committee and the **Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI)**—two reputable organisations that play a decisive role in shaping a fairer and more equitable world by promoting peace, diplomacy, and truthful, independent journalism.

"Economic integration, the primary argument for peace in the neoliberal period, has been wielded as a weapon of geopolitical submission."

"The Global South will face the challenge of reconciling its historical differences and grievances with its collective interests to establish itself as an aggregated, non-aligned power."

This report on the CAF2025 annual forum, held in December of the same year, was finalised in March 2026.

In its characteristic defence of diplomacy, the Doha Forum—the event within which this edition was framed—brought to a close a 2025 marked by escalating geopolitical tensions and the disrepute of international law: from the trade fractures caused by President Trump's tariffs and the emergence of a geoeconomy of transactionalism, to the unpredictable escalatory spiral between Iran and Israel and the unfulfilled ceasefire stopping the Palestinian genocide—with Gaza serving as the stage for the worst systematic slaughter of civilians and journalists in modern history.

In little over a month, however, 2026 has proven itself ready to raise the stakes of global uncertainty. The express invasion of Venezuela and the abduction of President Maduro have pushed to the limit the credibility of a political elite—already widely discredited by its inaction in the face of genocide. They only seem willing to shake off their sycophantic stupor and call for the rule of law when, in its voracity, the US starts to salivate over sovereign European territory. Only days after the Greenland crisis entered a dormant phase, while the hegemon turned to strangle Cuba, NATO appears to have entered its final countdown. As these lines are being finalised, the US and Israel have started an illegal war of aggression against Iran, executing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and top commanders through targeted bombings.

While the fear of anomie takes equal hold among social majorities and the world's ruling classes, a growing number of voices declare that—beyond the harrowing theatrics with which it is being dismantled—the outgoing order was always prisoner to its own inconsistency. In truth, as Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney recently

Preface

acknowledged at Davos with surprising candour, the emperor has been naked for quite some time. The “rules-based global order” alternated between universalism and discretionality depending on the particular interests of its American custodian. Economic integration, the primary argument for peace in the neoliberal period, has in fact been wielded as a weapon of geopolitical submission. The long awakening of the North’s peripheries, particularly Europe, seems to have culminated in the public realisation of their subordinate status. In the Prime Minister’s own words, “the fiction was useful [...], but this bargain no longer works.”

“We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false; that the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient; that trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And we knew that international law applied with varying rigour depending on the identity of the accused or the victim. This fiction was useful. And American hegemony, in particular, helped provide public goods: open sea lanes, a stable financial system, collective security and support for frameworks for resolving disputes. So, we placed the sign in the window. We participated in the rituals. And we largely avoided calling out the gaps between rhetoric and reality. This bargain no longer works.”

— Prime Minister Mark Carney at Davos, on January 20th 2026

The rest is history. The half-truths that, for decades, underpinned a dull, procedural notion of progress—especially in the multilateral forum, where every inch gained for justice was a resounding success—have given way to the brazen cynicism that today cements militarism and geopolitical competition. Economic development stands openly fuelled by imperialism and the extraction of value and resources, now also at the expense of societies in the Global North.

A month before Carney’s speech at Davos, and alongside a diverse group of global experts, including leading figures in cooperation and international law, CAF2025 explored this very dilemma. It is an issue that has been brewing within our strategy and our conversations for years. And, like an increasing number of international actors from the North to the Global South, we reached the same conclusion he did: cooperation and collective action are the only path ahead for non-hegemonic actors. Faced with the return of competition, coercion, and territorial aggression as the drivers of international relations, sovereignty will no longer be defined by the law, but by the capacity for joint resistance. The world’s middle and emerging powers, but particularly the Global South, will face the challenge of reconciling their historical differences and grievances with their collective interests to establish themselves as an aggregated, non-aligned power capable of negotiating and arbitrating as a bloc.

The future of the law and the fundamental values governing the international system will depend on the success of this resistance. Indeed, the creativity, generosity, vision, and pragmatism that such an alliance demands go beyond the mere preservation or defence of multilateralism, opening a civilisational opportunity for a new era of progress.

New dynamics in
urban planning
and international
cooperation in the
context of COVID-19

Common Action
Forum — 2020

**10 years
of common action
2015 — 2025**

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Law after (The)Order

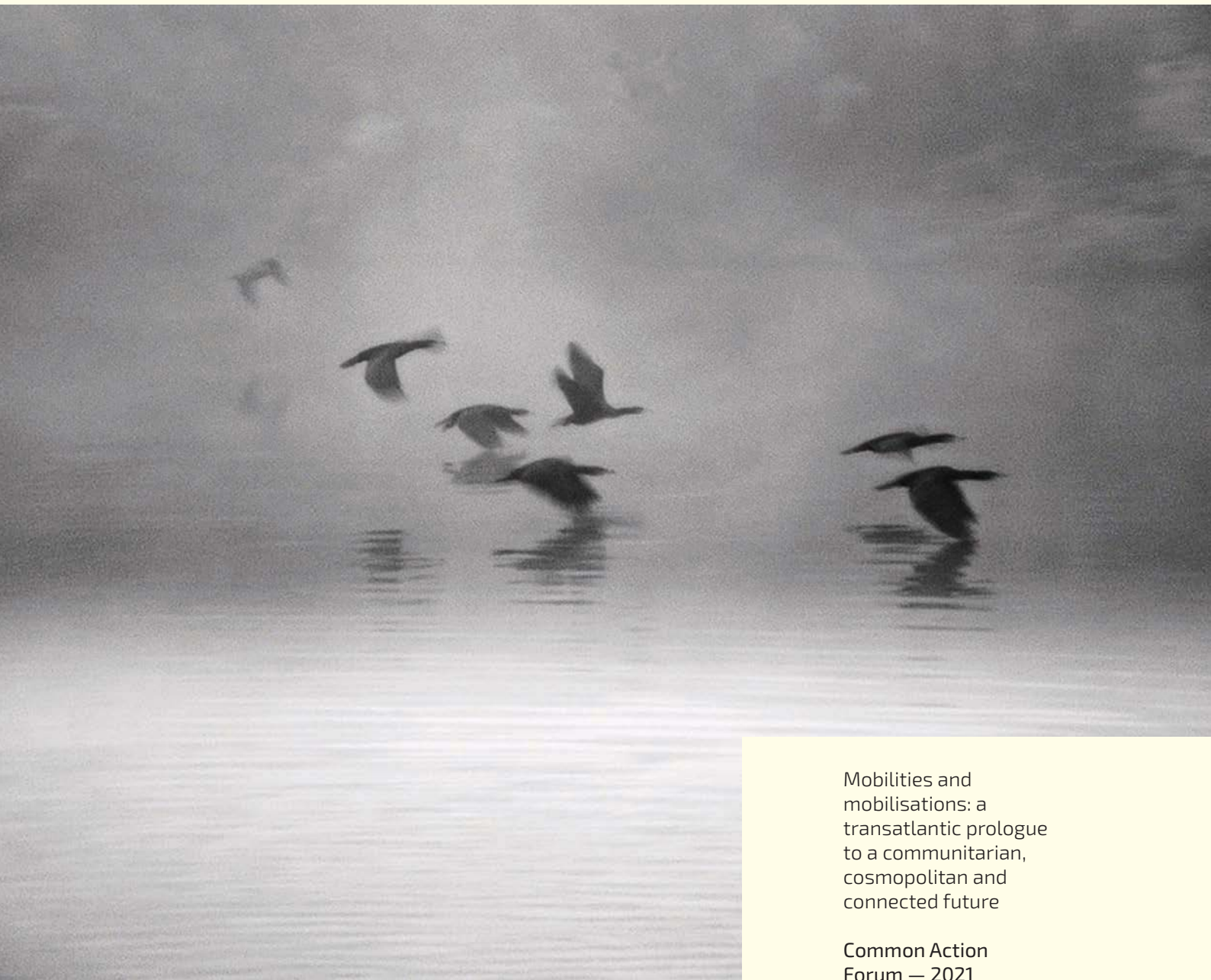
We are witnessing the siege, even the dismantling, of international law as we know it. One of its most fundamental principles—that power must be accountable and subject to oversight—is today widely called into question. The global order it underpinned has been undermined by its own custodian and architect, who considers that it has long since ceased to serve its purpose. In this context, the proliferation of war crimes and crimes against humanity is compounded by an increasingly and flagrantly arbitrary application of the law, and by a hegemon that sanctions and persecutes even officials of the UN or the International Criminal Court. The current power configuration is one of a tacit yet asymmetrical multipolarity, in which the US now demands increasingly high-handed concessions and capitulations through ever more openly coercive methods.

The US appears intent on continuing to reap the benefits of globalisation while disavowing its costs—whether by forcibly balancing the American trade deficit, devaluing the dollar while insisting it remain the international reserve currency, or imposing peace and rearmament plans advantageous to its own energy and arms industries, among others. Despite this ambivalence, the relative strategic withdrawal from territories such as the Middle East and Europe, and the announced pivot to the Indo-Pacific, seem to be consolidating instead as a selective return to the imperialist rhetoric of spheres of influence. This is evident in the arbitrary bombardment of manned vessels in the Caribbean and the pressure exerted on progressive democratic leaders in Latin America, such as Gustavo Petro or Lula da Silva. But also in the explicit economic and political support for reactionary Latin American leaders, such as Javier Milei or Nayib Bukele. It was further demonstrated immediately following the events of CAF2025, in episodes such as the express invasion of Venezuela, the territorial overtures towards Greenland, and the economic suffocation of Cuba, set against a backdrop of coercion against Mexico.

Until now, only China has demonstrated a significant capacity for resistance. However, while its foreign policy is based on promoting economic and logistical development and commends the continuity of the international system, its strategic objectives reflect how capitalism, competition, and extractivism remain the dominant global logics of this era—with energy and critical minerals as primary targets. This reality will define the immediate future not only of Latin America but, crucially, of Africa.

A new age of extreme cults of personality in geopolitics is ushering in. This is clear in projects such as the reconstruction of Gaza—with commercial and real estate prospects advantageous to Donald Trump's family circle—or the establishment of an international Board of Peace as a parallel multilateral forum—featuring clauses such as direct capital transfers for permanent participation and a life-long, nominal seat for the current president. Despite all this, it must be noted that the decline of international law is not the exclusive consequence of Donald Trump's foreign policy.

Beyond his particular brand of personalism and accelerationism, Trump is more a symptom than an actor in his policies, both domestic and international. We are witnessing an over-the-top phase of American exceptionalism, but it is the same one the world has known since at least the 19th century. This is not a change of direction, but rather the intensification and acceleration of its worst traits. Nor is this decline necessarily an expression of the dissolution of the unipolar order or Western hegemony. After all, this configuration of law was born of a bipolar order, however much it adapted following the end of the Cold War.



Mobilities and
mobilisations: a
transatlantic prologue
to a communitarian,
cosmopolitan and
connected future

Common Action
Forum — 2021

**10 years
of common action
2015 — 2025**

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Beyond Institutional Heritage

"This period of decline will not be the end of international law. The genocides in Bosnia, Gaza, Sudan, and Rwanda are separated by fewer than 40 years, and all of them took place under the watchful eye of the UN."

In addition to embodying power dynamics and quotas that no longer reflect the actual distribution of power in the world, it is indisputable that the institutions of multilateral governance and the international law that governs them have a controverted history.

This goes beyond the inherent lack of internal democracy within the IMF or the UN Security Council. From Westphalian legal concepts to the colonial foundations of maritime law, the laws of war, or investor-state dispute settlement frameworks, the scaffolding of the international system contains countless intrinsic asymmetries and built-in design flaws. It is but the result of a continuous intersection of power dynamics and historical priorities.

Despite its deficiencies, the defence and progressive strengthening of this model have been the dominant trend throughout most of its recent trajectory—even in the face of historic fiascos for the democratisation of the international system, such as the sidelining of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), the failure of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), the stalled reform of the Security Council, or the Conference on Disarmament. In fact, it can be argued that with the end of the colonial era and the Cold War, some of the greatest promises of global justice were consolidated. Most notably, the enshrinement of international criminal law and the Rome Statute, which was ratified and enacted despite being snubbed by the major powers.

This trend, however, has been reversed. The responsibility, it goes without saying, does not lie with a Global South that is perennially committed to reformism despite numerous setbacks. Since 2001, following the 11 September attacks, the military powers of the Global North have unilaterally expanded their interpretation of the

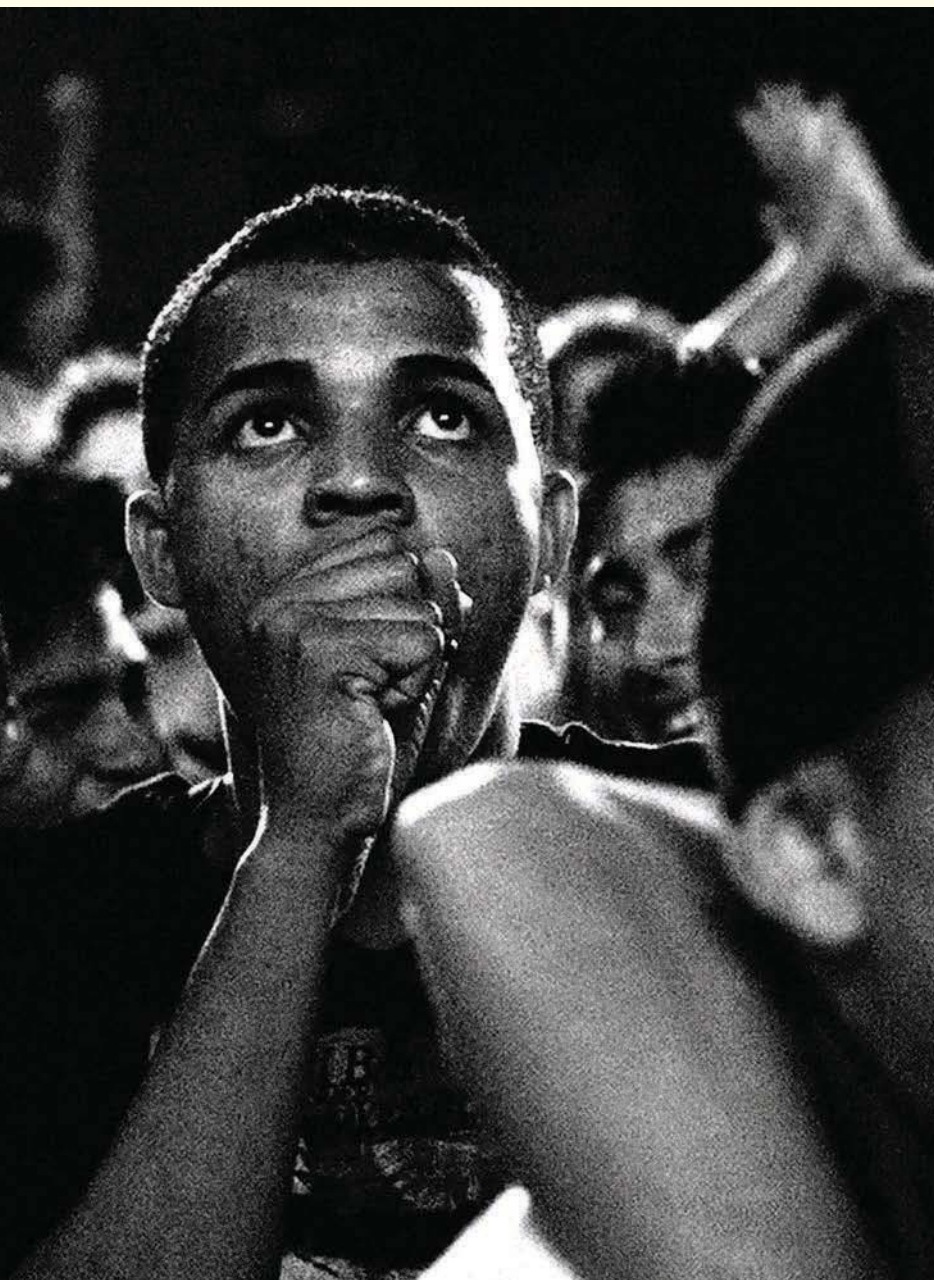
"We must not resign ourselves to just resisting, but continue to transform the world as the fundamental principle of a resistance agenda."

scope and application of "self-defence", endorsing unrestricted interventions under imprecise and arbitrary definitions. This has translated into an exponential increase in military aggression.

Just as the world must keep nostalgia in check, it must also guard its own tendency towards drama. As the historical legacy of its legal corpus and the evolving competences of its governing institutions attest, this period of decline will not be the end of international law. It has survived and transformed throughout modern history, even through some of its most brutal episodes. The last 100 years are, in fact, an exception. The paralysis of the League of Nations, the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the Bengal Famine are among the resounding failures that motivated its last refounding. However, it is worth remembering that the genocides in Bosnia, Gaza, Sudan, and Rwanda are separated by fewer than 40 years, and all of them took place under the watchful eye of the UN. Furthermore, during the 20th century alone, both before and after this paradigm shift, the United States was responsible for over 45 coups d'état in Latin America.

We are indisputably living through a moment of unease, a crisis of law. The world can and must denounce its deficiencies, and especially its paralysis. But it is as possible to declare the end of international law in light of these facts as it is to declare the end of engineering because a bridge collapsed. We shall witness the advent of a new rules-based world order, just as the Concert of Europe or the Peace of Westphalia existed before this one. The battle being fought today is for the very spirit of such a future scheme. The opportunity we must seize is that of a rule of law grounded in solidarity, goodwill, and the consensus of global majorities. That is to say, a just and genuine multilateralism—one in which the Global South will keep a pre-eminent role.

The historical development of international law is the ultimate expression of our species' drive for reform and democratisation. As a universalist project, it continues to represent a perennial and radically human power—one that remains in the hands of anyone still willing to wield it. Continuing to move forward with creativity and collaboration, even against all odds, and seizing the political opportunity at each stage does not mean disowning its history, its asymmetries, or its ambiguities. Rather, it means championing its spirit. It means not resigning oneself to just resisting, but continuing to transform the world as the fundamental principle of a resistance agenda.



Democracy and the new
progressive wave in
Latin America
From the Bolivian
experience to the
Brazilian elections

Common Action
Forum — 2022

**10 years
of common action
2015 — 2025**

Photo_ **Save the Dream**_ CC BY 2.0

A Strategic Roadmap for Middle Powers

The apparent paradox that the Global South has historically supported an international system designed to disadvantage it has, in reality, always been a strategic choice. Even in the face of structural asymmetries, international law has provided avenues for defence and reform that, while not infallible, do allow for the weathering, slowing, or at least the exposing of abuses by great powers. Their presence within the multilateral system has granted young, sometimes unstable states—and nations scarred by the trauma of colonialism—the direct and symbolic benefits of the validation of their sovereignty and independence, as well as access to a space of cooperation with their peers. These were spaces of power previously denied to them, but which would inevitably continue to operate in their absence.

The calculation has always been clear: starting from a weaker position, the Global South has gained more than it has lost by participating in a global order designed against it. But it is more than that. Through its participation, the South has demonstrated time and again that political pragmatism is not at odds with a struggle for universal values.

It is for this reason that middle powers, especially those in the Global South, must step forward. To articulate a front of emerging nations is to commit to something more than 'ordered injustice', with biased but predictable rules. Indeed, before the frustrations following the consolidation of the unipolar model, the Non-Aligned Movement was crucial to the establishment of the post-war global order. In the face of the weakness of bilateral negotiations with great powers, examples such as contemporary maritime law remind us that, with sufficient strength, the organised diplomatic rebellion of the peripheries can transform the system.

"The tradition of defiance, contesting of imperial narratives and self-assertion in the face of apartheid, plunder and social engineering is what shapes the political imaginaries of the South."

The US's abandonment of this framework—and its attempt to consolidate alternative frameworks that, like the so-called "Board of Peace", institutionalise hierarchy and transactionalism—can motivate nothing less than the defence of current international law and a commitment to even more radical democratic reform.

Regional Cooperation against the Reactionary Wave

As much as by collective trauma, the Global South has been historically shaped by geopolitical and geoeconomic dependencies. This makes promoting a unified global action among regions that do not share the same languages, cultures, needs, or economic approaches a challenge in itself. What the South does share is a well-established tradition of defiance and self-assertion against apartheid, plunder, and colonialist social engineering. This contesting of imperial narratives, nonetheless, goes hand-in-hand with a necessary pragmatism in its relations with the great powers, which are asymmetrical by default. This shared will for both well-being and justice shapes its political imaginaries as much as, if not more than, colonial wounds.

Despite its apparent current decline, all of this makes regionalism the most powerful form of cooperation available for the Global South. This approach allows for the creation of more cohesive spaces for cooperation and solidarity, facilitating the articulation of a historical narrative that makes them more visible and better protects them from intimidation and reprisals. In this sense, it is essential to remember that the rise of global reactionarism has enormous consequences for the return of regionalism. Beyond a certain internal diversity, networks of mutual financial support, and the media theatrics of their alliances, the neo-nationalist vocation that unites these movements also makes them reluctant to engage in collective

political action, especially when it comes to defining a joint international agenda.

This can be seen not only in the speed with which Latin American reactionary movements dismantled UNASUR or in the Euroscepticism of European far-right parties, but also in the crisis of alliances sparked by the foreign policy of Donald Trump's second term: those belonging to what was previously perceived as a reactionary international led by the American president have been forced into snubs, cornered by the unpopularity of his tariff policies and his aggressions against territorial sovereignty, especially in Europe.

The widespread presence of reactionary agendas today remains a significant obstacle to the return of regionalism and to cooperation in general. However, this characteristic inability to reconcile shared values with an inherent tendency toward isolationism will leave a vacuum in international cooperation, offering increasing incentives to fill it.

Innovation and Diversification as a Mutual Support Strategy

One of the fundamental hurdles to collective action is that the international system is still shaped by US designs, even as it undergoes a change in hegemonic regime. While the international system already seemed designed to encourage the fragmentation of these regions—penalising the emergence of solidarity—many view the economic violence of the current US government as almost an invitation to establish alternative models. As it abuses the political and commercial perks that have enabled it to dominate the system to date, it increases the cost of participation for other nations, especially in terms of economic dependency, thereby pushing for a diversification that yields fewer gross benefits but greater security.

In their current state, the world's major free trade agreements block the Global South's capacity to develop industrial policies, and thus its ability to diversify sources and resources. As long as the primary financial, institutional, and logistical nodes of the international system remain under exclusive US control, the best card for emerging powers to play is a commitment to creative cooperation. In recent years, spaces such as the BRICS have led significant advances in digital monetary innovation and knowledge transfer, and much of this ingenuity, in fact, responds to the need to design alternatives independent of hegemonic control. In addition to being a global regulatory power, the EU possesses valuable experience, not only in political and economic integration but also in developing its own banking and financial infrastructure. Countries such as Russia, meanwhile, have tinkered with independence from the SWIFT system.

Although its capacity for bilateral coercion will remain fearsome, as the US retreats from the multilateral mechanisms that manage these nodes, we can expect a loosening of the regulatory pressures that currently hinder new forms of innovation and cooperation. For middle powers, the best short-term option appears to be navigating between the influence of China and the US, attempting to benefit from the economic protection of the Belt and Road Initiative while simultaneously relying on the security of the American military umbrella. However, this model—which may not be viable in the medium term—runs the risk of crystallising state individualism and a bilateral dynamic between great and middle powers that will only benefit the former.

Supporting Multilateral Reform

Working within parallel configurations—be they minilateral, regional, or economic—serves to unlock

the innovative potential of middle powers and to develop advancements that can ultimately benefit the entire multilateral spectrum. This does not imply abandoning spaces such as the UN and its agencies, or international financial institutions. Not only will they remain politically decisive forums, but they will become increasingly susceptible to redemocratisation as their budgetary deficit grows, exacerbated by the coercion or arbitrariness of American funding.

Middle powers have the potential to uphold the international rule of law; however, in the past, some of their own regional hegemonic projects have also contributed to its weakening. Indeed, it is worth remembering that many remain apart from, or in opposition to, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. A joint cooperation agenda that champions international law as a guarantor of moral, economic, and security stability can promote the integration of these forces into current frameworks—offering an opportunity to refound the horizontality of treaties and the independence mechanisms of the courts.

This would not only ensure that international and humanitarian law remain, *de iure*, the foundations of the multilateral system at all levels, but would also facilitate their *de facto* stabilisation. US disengagement and the continuity that shapes Chinese foreign policy make this potential reform an opportunity to address the long-standing historical demands of middle powers within the UN, such as the reform of the Security Council. To pave the way for more transformative consensus in the medium term and break the current stagnation, it may be instrumental to push for reasonable, high-impact changes, such as the inclusion of at least one permanent representative from each continent.

Leading an Active International Cooperation

There is a necessary intersection between the promotion of international law and a principled foreign policy/cooperation. Spaces for dialogue and collective action are not the answer in themselves. The world is no stranger to the consequences of excessive proceduralism, nor to the instrumentalisation of dialogue as a drag or even as a justification for weak diplomatic responses. The tepid and cynical communiqués of the European Union or the grandiloquent lists of recommendations from the Arab League or the Islamic Cooperation Council—which remain dead letters—exemplify how, even during a genocide, these bodies can exacerbate the problem of inaction.

The answer lies in leading by example, making a new form of cooperation visible, and preventing a lack of consensus from continuing to exempt from accountability those who currently avoid fulfilling their international commitments. The proliferation of groupings centred on specific causes and led by nations willing to champion specific measures, especially in terms of domestic policy, facilitates this shift in dynamics. The Hague Group, for example, is a testament to this, with state-led political, diplomatic and commercial initiatives in defence of international justice and the Palestinian people, and specifically against Israeli impunity.

These spaces do not disavow the differences among their members; they embrace heterogeneity. By committing to what unites them, they champion a pragmatic pessimism of the mind alongside a visionary optimism of the will. It is naive to expect that the world, and especially the Global South, can afford the luxury of systematically abandoning transactionalism; therefore, when building global majorities on key issues, adaptability and flexibility

are essential. The failure of spaces like the COPs—which are as urgent as they are generalist and maximalistic—should encourage us to mobilise coalitions around specific, nationally impactful agendas, producing tangible results and more effectively incentivising the integration of their peers. Initiatives already exist regarding core issues such as global taxes, crimes against humanity, climate change, etc., but it is fundamental that these be led by new and genuine “coalitions of the willing,” whose aggregated measures constitute international action in itself.

In this sense, the EU's status as a regulatory power and its impact on global trade policies are compelling reasons not to relent in seeking the support of European nations. Regarding issues like genocide, but also far beyond, coalitions of middle powers willing to understand and act on interconnected causes are indispensable. Broad-brush sanctions against specific extremists or products from occupied territories essentially give carte blanche to pro-genocide politicians who present themselves as moderates, and to an occupation that is irremediably sustained by the business and social fabric of the rest of Israel.

Facilitating a New Global Narrative

In line with the need to build bridges and create coalitions of mutual interest, the emergence of a new narrative with global reach that can contextualise these processes is becoming increasingly urgent. Given the decline of the international system, as well as that of spaces with specific narratives like NATO, categories such as West, East, and Global North and South are losing their meaning. This process is further exacerbated by the growing disconnect between the will of Western social majorities and the priorities of their governments.

"The alliance against the decline of international law and its dangers remains a project that is little more than intellectual, rather than political."

The strategic approaches described in this report utilise these very categories for descriptive reasons while simultaneously attempting to navigate their limitations. These strategies can and should be put into practice as soon as possible, and they will naturally lay the groundwork for such a narrative. However, paradoxically, this narrative will also need to acquire its own weight to support the strategies themselves. Thinking in terms of the Global South, the European Union, or the Non-Aligned Movement will continue to add value to strategic agendas; yet, to collectively differentiate what must be protected, transformed, and resisted, we will need a human and universal rationale. While the narrative of the struggle against injustice holds immense power, the alliance against the decline of international law and its dangers remains a project that is little more than intellectual, rather than political.

This narrative will face the challenge of establishing a universal agenda of basic principles, however much activist practice may be confined to specific struggles. To this end, spaces like the multilateral forum, despite their limitations, remain the most useful due to their symbolic weight. However, one cannot ignore the power imbalance that characterises today's media, both traditional and digital. Beyond specific issues like information noise, the current media model is incompatible with a multipolar world.

Middle and small powers are forced to broadcast, and even share, whatever is offered to given the global concentration of media power and algorithmic control. Until recently, social networks promised to catalyse individual human expression and even social organisation. Today, they are openly monopolised instruments, manipulated according to the interests of major corporations and the states whose power their actions amplify. The protection and promotion of truly free journalism thus remain one of the most critical pending tasks.

In this vein, and given that it is now clear that indifference toward the genocide is a bargaining chip for economic and strategic interaction with the US, it is worth framing the so-called "Palestine effect." The cause of Palestinian liberation is accelerating political disaffection across much of the developed world, partly because it exposes the extent to which barbarism is perpetrated through the political and economic facilitation of their governments, and against the will of social majorities. The genocide has revealed not only the double standards of many states in making an exception out of this conflict, but also the frequency with which political condemnations are accompanied by tacit strategic support and corporate benefits with little to no redistribution.

It is not, then, about nations, but about the priorities and projects of global elites—the same ones who throughout the world have enriched themselves at the expense of colonialism, Bretton Woods policies, or the primacy of the dollar. And despite this, the reasons for hope remain. Growing discontent over social inequality and the poor outlook for their extractive adventures has pushed the global economic system to the brink: born in the breeding ground of unregulated speculation, the race to develop artificial intelligence has already officially become a bubble of unpredictable dimensions, with the potential for a new global shock. This is happening amid rampant inflation, social polarisation, and massive debt, including in the US.

Inasmuch as the damage could reach historic levels, and knowing the political havoc caused by the mismanagement of the last great crisis, this prospect must call us to creativity and even optimism. To draft plans for containment and resistance, but above all, to design alternatives that believe in the future. The time to dream is now.



Wadah Khanfar
WELCOME WORDS

Wadah Khanfar, co-founder and Chairman of the **Common Action Forum** is a leading voice in global media and policy innovation. As the former Director General of Al Jazeera Network, he transformed the organisation into one of the world's most influential media outlets. Under his leadership, the Common Action Forum has emerged as a vital platform connecting Global South perspectives, hosting ground-breaking dialogues between policymakers, intellectuals, and civil society leaders from over 40 countries.



Rafael Heiber
PARTICIPANT

Rafael Heiber is Co-Founder and Vice-President of the **Common Action Forum**. A geographer and climatologist, he holds a Master's degree in Territorial Planning and a PhD in Sociology; he is an Associate Professor of Social Change and Political Theory at Carlos III University of Madrid.



Agnès Callamard
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Agnès Callamard is a human rights scholar and advocate. She serves as Secretary General of Amnesty International and previously held the mandate of UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Her work addresses state violence, accountability, and the erosion of international legal norms, combining academic rigour with direct engagement in global human rights mechanisms.



Francesca Albanese
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Francesca Albanese is an international law expert and UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Her work focuses on international humanitarian law, occupation, and accountability, with particular attention to structural violations and power asymmetries. She has contributed extensively to legal scholarship and policy debates on international protection regimes.

Participants

Once again this year, CAF would like to thank all the people who enriched our forum with their presence, ideas and hopes.



Guillaume Long
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Guillaume Long is a political analyst and former diplomat. He previously served as Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representative to the United Nations. His work concentrates on global power shifts, South–South relations, and critiques of Western-centric multilateralism. He is a frequent commentator on international affairs, geopolitical realignments, and institutional reform.



Herta Däubler-Gmelin
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Herta Däubler-Gmelin is a jurist and former federal politician. She served as Germany's Federal Minister of Justice and as a long-standing member of the Bundestag. Her career has focused on constitutional law, civil liberties, and international justice, with sustained engagement in human rights advocacy and legal accountability within both national and international frameworks.



Nurul Izzah Anwar
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Nurul Izzah Anwar is a social policy activist, former legislator and public servant. She co-founded Malaysia's leading multiethnic party, the People's Justice Party (KEADILAN) in 1999 and was elected Deputy President in 2025. She also spends her time working with women and youth in communities as Chair of Polity, a think tank that bridges evidence-based research with on-the-ground interventions.



Ahmed Eldin
MODERATOR

Ahmed Eldin is a journalist, television host, and documentary filmmaker. He has reported for Al Jazeera English and hosted programs addressing global politics, social change, and intergenerational dynamics. His work bridges long-form journalism and public dialogue, with a focus on power, identity, and narrative framing across cultures, particularly in contexts shaped by conflict, inequality, and political transformation.



Arafat Madi
PARTICIPANT

Arafat Madi is a senior researcher specialising in political transitions and governance in the Arab world. At Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, his work focuses on state–society relations, elite fragmentation, and institutional resilience in conflict and post-conflict settings. He regularly contributes policy analysis and research-based commentary on regional power dynamics and comparative political developments.



Ayo Obe
PARTICIPANT

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Mohamed Affan is a policy and education specialist and Director of Academia at Al Sharq Forum. His work centres on political thought, leadership development, and capacity-building for emerging actors from the Global South. He designs and oversees academic and training programmes that link critical theory, governance, and practical policy engagement across regional and ideological contexts.



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Faizal Dawjee is a media and politics analyst, formerly Media Director of the government of South Africa. Current Communications Advisor and former director of the Afro-Middle East Centre, his work focuses on African political economy, South-South relations, and post-liberal global order debates. His analysis frequently addresses decolonial thought, strategic autonomy, and the positioning of African states within shifting global power structures.



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Galip Dalay is a political analyst, Senior Consulting Fellow at Chatham House, and non-resident fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. His work focuses on Turkish foreign policy, regional geopolitics, and the implications of multipolarity for the Middle East. He regularly publishes policy analyses on great-power competition, regional alignments, and the evolution of the international order.



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Mei Shigenobu is a journalist and editor specialising in international news and global affairs. As an editor at Al Jazeera, she oversees coverage of geopolitics, social movements, and transnational issues, with a focus on narrative accuracy and contextual depth. Her professional work reflects a strong engagement with cross-regional perspectives and global information flows.



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PARTICIPANT

Nicola Enchmarch is the Managing Director of CAF. She has a wealth of commercial and Not for Profit experience acquired over 20+ years in business and management consultancy roles across multiple industry sectors within the UK, New Zealand, Europe and the MENA region. Nicola holds a BRS in Environmental Studies and continues to maintain an active interest within this field.



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Tayab Ali is an international human rights lawyer, Deputy Managing Partner at Bindmans Law and Director of the International Centre for Justice for Palestinians. His work focuses on accountability, sanctions, and strategic litigation concerning Palestine in both international and domestic legal systems. He is a prominent advocate for the application of international law and the mechanisms of universal jurisdiction.



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Tristán Torrejón
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Tristán Torrejón is a programme management specialist and Program Manager at the Common Action Forum. His work focuses on the design and coordination of international initiatives linking policy analysis, civil society, and advocacy. As part of CAF, he supports cross-regional collaboration on issues of global justice, institutional reform, and multilateral engagement.



Photo Gallery



CAF

Report

Anniversary Edition

2025

**10 years
of common
action**

"Globalisation, neoliberal developmentalism, the erosion of democracy, and the dizzying growth of inequality and technology have shaped a world anchored more in nostalgia than in the prospects of a future."

10 Years of Common Action

Common Action Forum (CAF) began its journey in 2015, seeking to establish itself as a response to a sense of lost innocence in contemporary human experience. Our starting point back then was to look “beyond the Spring”, towards the crossroads of histories and challenges linking the Arab world with Latin America. Yet our gaze, always fixed on the Global South, was destined to broaden. Even before those days, economic and cultural globalisation, neoliberal developmentalism, the erosion of democracy, and the dizzying growth of inequality and technology had been shaping a world anchored more in nostalgia than in the prospects of a future.

As a think tank and a space for cross-cutting and transformative critique, CAF's vocation has always been to analyse more than just the symptoms: we aim at the deeper condition underlying this era of uncertainty into which we seem to be venturing. We aspired to chaperon the beginning of the end of a cycle, envisioning scenarios of cooperation, joint planning, and redistribution. Quite simply,

however, that is not how things have played out for our world. Reaching the tenth anniversary of this project's foundation, we must accept that humanity finds itself at a point as dangerous as it was predictable. This, however, does not mean resignation. On the contrary, in today's global landscape, weaving networks of collective action is now more urgent than ever.

Insofar as transformations are accelerating in an uncertain, exponential, and mutually reinforcing manner, it is impossible to predict how long this transition period will last. At CAF, we are positive that, by their very nature—their characteristic unsustainability and short-sightedness—the dysfunctions surrounding us will not triumph. Yet, we do not know when, or at what cost, the alternative will come. In that sense, while it is hardly surprising that neoliberalism and extractivism have led us to this point, we do believe it is in humanity's most pressing interest to understand why real alternatives have not yet emerged, or perhaps why they have failed to thrive.



Together, for the world

Common Action
Forum — 2023

**10 years
of common action
2015 — 2025**

Indigenous People Memorial, Brasília
Photo_ [Anabella Salem](#)_ CC BY 2.0

Forums, Encounters, and Dialogues

Since our founding and by virtue of this pursuit, CAF's events and projects have been driven by a commitment to cross-cutting, multidisciplinary approaches and a diversity of perspectives. The organisation serves as a cultural and philosophical array, bridging regions, experiences, and generations as it expands its network of action. From seasoned outlooks to the freshness of emerging voices. From the experience of those who know our systems of governance and knowledge from the inside, to the vigour of those acutely aware of their urgent limitations. From the importance of crafting narratives to the unavoidable necessity of building and defending material realities.

Instead of forcing ourselves into a choice between an outmoded universalism and the paroxysm of local fragmentation, we have focused our efforts on exploring that which is "common": a new humanism oriented towards an ecological and increasingly digitised society. We maintain the hope that it is possible to refound civilisation, liberating it from the illusions of rationality, efficiency, and profit. In short, we seek those coordinates of the common from which to begin building the "impossible".

The "Common Action Forums", or **CAF Annual Forums**, from which the organisation takes its name, constitute an open platform designed to bring together leading international voices to foster far-reaching public debate and calls for social awareness and action. Since their establishment in 2019, the **OCTAGON** meetings have, for their part, taken the form of a private annual roundtable, where up to 40 experts engage in intensive, focused discussions on the vital issues of our time, consolidating analyses and synergies that can be translated into action plans and policy recommendations. Among various other projects, the independent publication **metapolis** stands

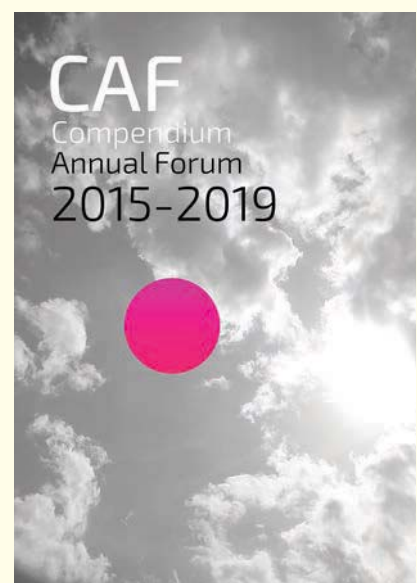
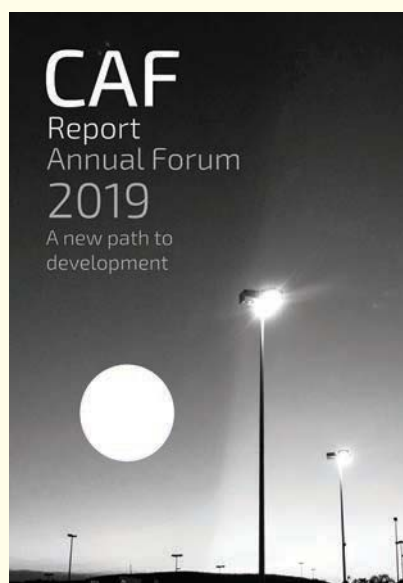
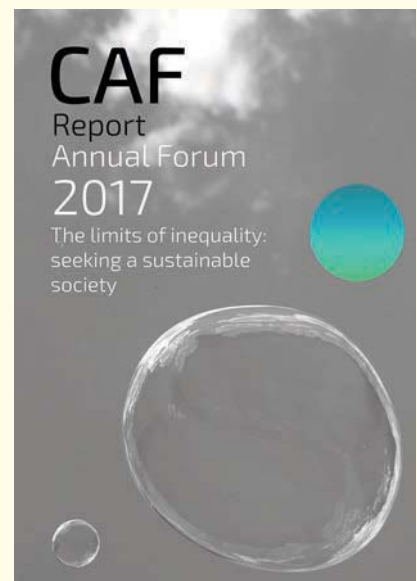
out. Launched in 2020 amid the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, it serves as a pluralistic space for intellectual exchange and reflection. It represents our commitment to continue building and supporting an alternative global agenda for progress.

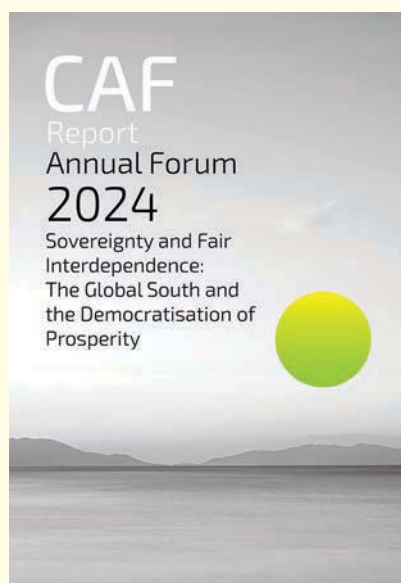
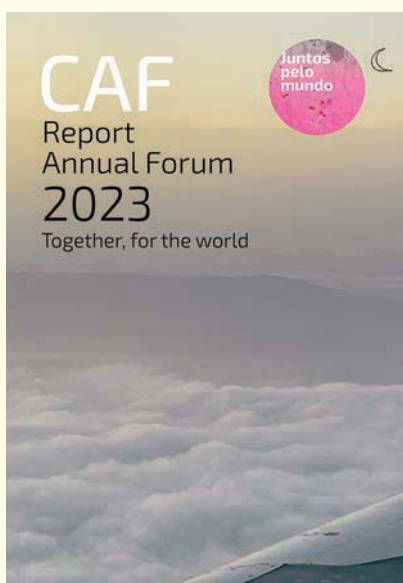
Among our many other initiatives, notable **seminars** include “A Progressive Call to Sustain Democracy and the Multipolar Order”, “Palestine & Israel after October 07th: Motivations and Consequences”, and “Ibero-American countries and their role in light of the Trump administration”. Key **strategic meetings and workshops** include the colloquium “Gulf Crisis, the Qatar Blockade, and the Voice of Al-Jazeera Network”, “Industrial Policy: Seizing Semiconductor Opportunities”, “Strengthening Public Health Security”, and “Multilateralism and International Cooperation: Mobilising Resources for Climate Action”. CAF has also collaborated on the organisation of **projects, congresses, conferences, and courses** such as the “OSLO AT 25 – An Illusory Peace” meeting, the “New Social Contract” conversations, the “Lawfare and Mass Surveillance: Diagnosis, Prevention, and Sanction in Latin America” panel organised with the Argentine Ministry of Justice, and the course “Multidisciplinary Dialogue between Science and Religion: A Meeting in Times of Pandemic” at the Menéndez Pelayo International University Summer School.

Faced with the global onslaught of a formidable new reactionary and neo-nationalist wave, as well as the international dynamics of competition, coercion, and colonisation that underpin it, CAF will continue to champion projects that open new horizons for cooperation. Necessarily, this entails moving beyond the idea of a single, replicable model in all regions, and specifically strengthening citizenship and multilateralism.

This report is merely a summary of the rigorous critical work that the network of experts we have had the pleasure of building has been conducting in the aforementioned spaces. Alongside more than 400 specialists and with the support of organisations and allies worldwide, throughout these ten years, we have together explored the primary challenges of the contemporary world. Namely:

- The consequences and interconnections between **rising inequality** and the philosophies underpinning our **models of growth and development**.
- The forces and factors behind **democratic disaffection, securitisation**, and the rise of **reactionary movements and new social processes**.
- The dysfunctions of the **global order, international cooperation, and multilateralism**, with particular focus on the growing **transformative potential of the Global South**.
- **The Palestinian question** as the quintessential expression of these dysfunctions, and its link to the **global redefinition of civil action** in the face of **increasingly existential common challenges and risks**.







OCTAGON 2019

The era of (in) security:
urgent matters and
self-defeating prophecies

Madrid, Spain | 22 – 24 November

OCTAGON



OCTAGON 2020

The irrefutable meta-crisis:
challenges and opportunities
after COVID-19

Madrid, Spain | 20 November

OCTAGON

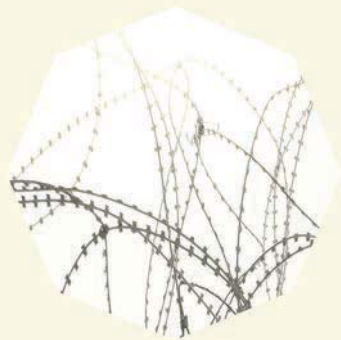


OCTAGON 2021

New perspectives for the
Israeli-palestine conflict:
a roadmap for global justice
in the 21st century

Madrid, Spain | 20 November

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OCTAGON 2022

Israel-Palestine:
New Era, New Narrative,
New Strategies

Madrid, Spain | 5 November 2022

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OCTAGON 2023

The Palestinian Question
and the Global (Dis)Order

Madrid, Spain | 20 January 2024

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OCTAGON 2024

Facing Existential Crises:
From Gaza to Europe and the
Role of the Global South

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OCTAGON

You can find the report of OCTAGON_2025
and those of our other events in
www.commonactionforum.net.

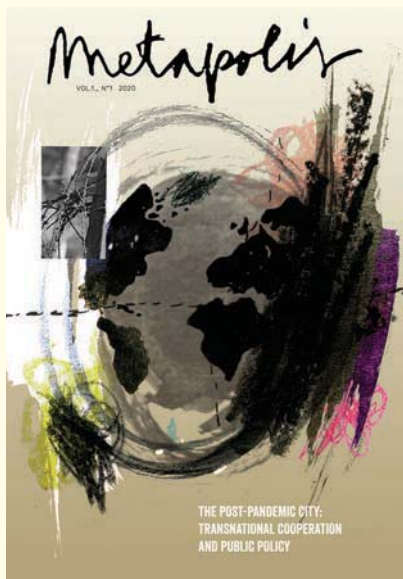


OCTAGON 2025

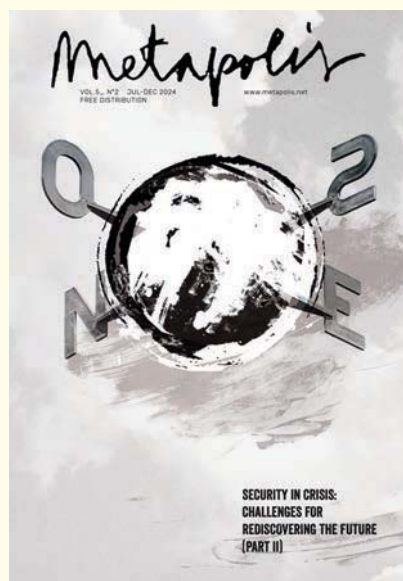
**Post-Gaza Politics:
A Prelude for a Global Solidarity**

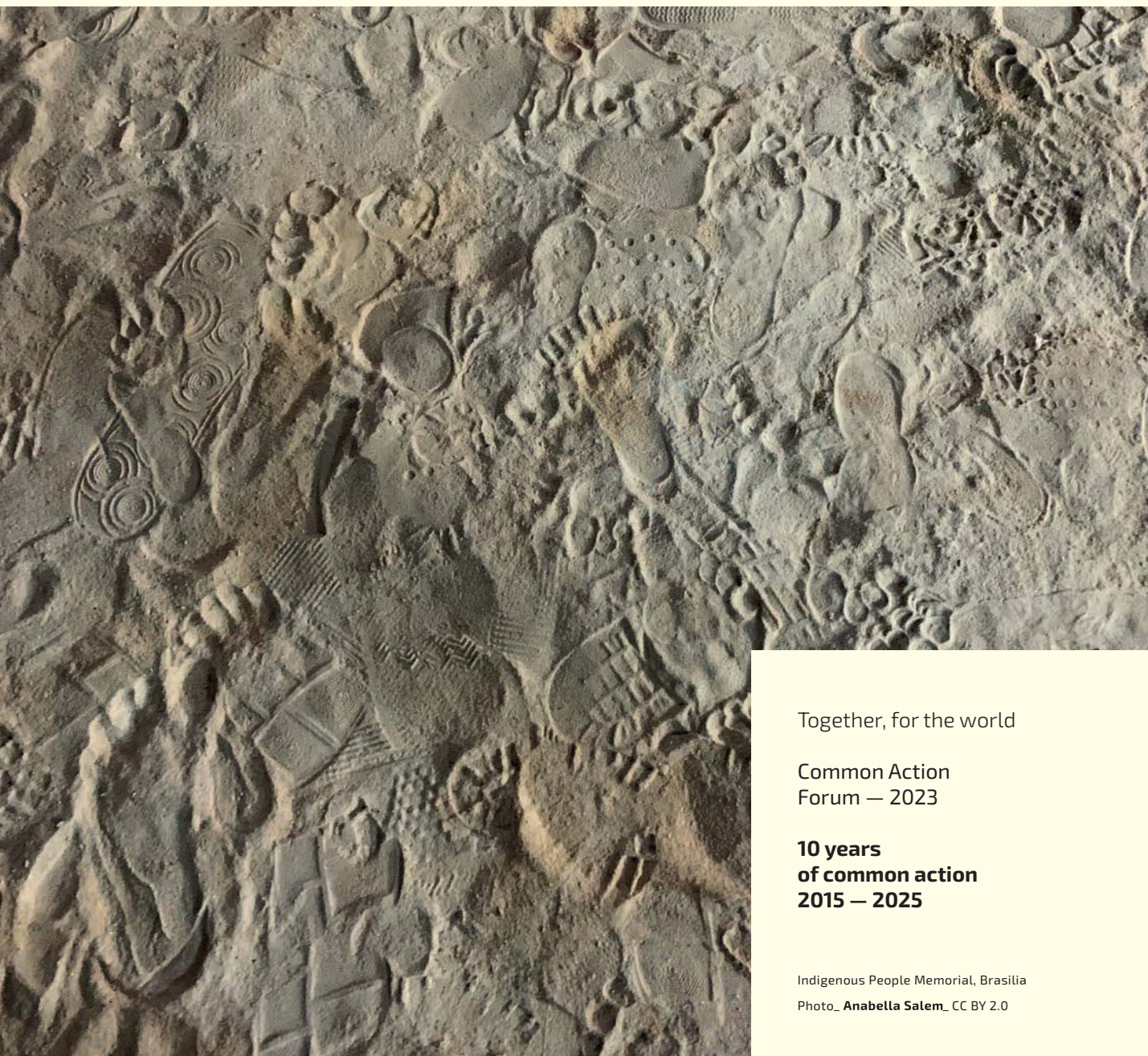
Madrid, Spain | 28 November 2025

OCTAGON



All the published numbers
of metapolis can be found in
www.metapolis.net





Together, for the world

Common Action
Forum — 2023

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Indigenous People Memorial, Brasília
Photo_ **Anabella Salem**, CC BY 2.0

A Civilisational *Metacrisis*

"CAF's seeks to propose alternatives to the entropic, hopeless, and elusive visions that currently fuel denialism, technological messianism, nihilism, hatred, and fear."

"The *metacrisis* is unleashed precisely at the heart of the cultural metabolism that organises our relationships with the world and ourselves, cutting across our notions of what is urgent, intelligible, questionable, or just."

In recent years, within the breeding ground of ecological collapse, economic dysfunction, and democratic and geopolitical distrust, "crisis" has become an everyday notion. Amidst political, social, economic, and security crises, the climate crisis, the migration crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, and a far from negligible list of others, neologisms such as "polycrisis" and "permacrisis" have emerged. These terms seem intended to condense the experience of contemporary life—that exhausting sequence of "historic events"—with nearly as much panic as scorn.

In their own way, however, all these new terms present the same problem of perspective: despair in facing the unmanageable. It is this same existential fatalism that today inspires the siren calls of Silicon Valley, attempting to convince us that only an unrestrained technological arms race can save us from ourselves. Since its founding, CAF's vocation has been to propose alternatives to the entropic, hopeless, and elusive visions that currently fuel denialism, technological messianism, nihilism, hatred, and fear. Over time, we would consolidate our own interpretation under a different term: the *metacrisis*.

The *metacrisis*, in itself, is a refusal to merely map the connections between dysfunctions and collapses. It manifests as the possibility of an original crisis, an ailment of the matrix that inevitably encompasses its consequences. It points to the epistemological dysfunctions of much of the contemporary thought and their relationship to very tangible issues, such as authoritarian cycles, neoliberalism, colonialism, extractivism, and the destruction of ecosystems.

Rather than being complex, the *metacritical* gaze is genealogical. It embodies the suspicion and the search for at least one common root among so many ramifying challenges. It does not declare with

awe the arrival of a cross-cutting and definitive crisis, but rather identifies the coordinates of a flaw in our system of interpretation and meaning production. This "coding error", seemingly so ethereal, encompasses, structures, and enables other crises as a generative condition: it is not necessarily—or not always—a linear and univocal cause, but it provides fertile grounds for the germination, acceleration, and mutual articulation of numerous other challenges. For these are not independent of one another, nor are they independent of our systems of valuation and action. The *metacrisis* is unleashed precisely at the heart of the cultural metabolism that organises our relationships with the world and ourselves, cutting across our notions of what is urgent, intelligible, questionable, or just.

Despite appearances, however, the *metacritical* gaze is possibilistic. One might almost call it optimistic: it believes in solutions without disparaging the utility of stopgap fixes, yet it also clearly distinguishes between the two. By way of analogy, this perspective recognises the importance of treating the many symptoms of an ailing body to sustain life, but also of addressing the root cause of the illness to achieve a cure. Consequently, it necessarily believes in the possibility of healing. It does not deny the urgency of tackling visible imbalances, but it warns of the ultimate risk of losing ourselves in managing the fragmented.

Ultimately, the *metacritical* gaze compels us to address crises by opening up new thresholds. Far from being content with merely weathering them in a headlong rush forward, it is a commitment to allowing solutions to emerge, to moving beyond mere survival as a philosophy for the future. And so, positing the *metacrisis* means giving transcendence a chance: in the face of collapsistic anxiety, resignation, and indifference, it reminds us of the need to recognise ourselves within our own

"Humanity is governed by a silent ontology of the separate: from academic specialities that overlap but don't dialogue, to a model of socio-political organisation that understands well-being, or knowledge as mere appendages of the economy."

problems of perspective—to transform meaning as a condition of possibility for transforming the world.

From an Epistemic Crisis to Social Fragmentation

At the heart of this metacrisis thus lie the flaws, atrophies, and dysfunctions that plague the contemporary framework of meaning production. That is to say, the dominant one. To assert that we inhabit the failure of humanism and Enlightened thought does not presuppose a denial of the enormous critical wealth—often ancestral—and the counter-hegemonic currents that have denounced its contradictions throughout history. Hegemonic discourse is, after all, a constant negotiation between thought and power; between utopia and pragmatism; between the ideas that people, elites, freethinkers, propagandists, revolutions, and counter-reforms manage to frame within law or collective imagination. Thought and power thrive because of, and in spite of, one another, and tend towards mutual instrumentalisation.

The fundamental flaw to which almost all our conversations over the last ten years return is precisely that of a **non-integrative hegemonic thought**. This epistemological framework, through which the powers that be and a large portion of the global majority perceive the world, has championed hyper-specialisation as a method and instrumentality as an end. The result is a constellation of disciplines and ideas, characterised as much by applicability and performance as by a counter-intuitive lack of communication between its parts.

This approach has led humanity as a whole to be governed by a silent ontology of the separate, organised around discrete entities such as the individual, the State, the market, or the nation.

These are taken for granted in all facets of our lives: from the microcosm of academic specialities that overlap but do not dialogue, to a model of socio-political organisation that understands well-being, community, labour, or knowledge as mere appendages of the economy. Ultimately, this model has conceived institutions that are as incapable of providing a coordinated response to transnational problems as they are of understanding local realities.

While this framework possesses the tools to generate social categories and discourses—and to endorse, transmit, and archive knowledge—the paradox lies in its failure to recognise that these very compartments, though sometimes useful, are not real, much less self-contained. This occurs despite the fact that it has granted us ample tools to problematise its own historicity and interdependencies. Ironically, it has also marginalised ancestral integrative perspectives, in which the human being and their network of relationships cannot be understood apart from their environment, to the point of reducing epistemic diversity to little more than folklore.

The Identity Crisis of Progressivism

It is worth noting, however, that non-integrative hegemonic thought also colonises and, ultimately, conditions counter-hegemonic narratives themselves. After ten years of working to develop and promote a global progressive agenda, we have also observed how the itemisation of new categories and dissident narratives has been effectively weaponised to fragment the frontlines of civil action. Even as it emerges from urgent reflections on power-marginalisation dynamics and the vast spectrum of human experience, the exaltation of diversity has often been pitted against what is essential and common in a false dichotomy.

"Paradoxically, during a period marked by material inequality, progressive agendas have been defined almost exclusively around symbolic issues."

Paradoxically, this has prevented articulating the dimensions and struggles that unite the global majorities.

The problem itself does not arise from the availability of a wide range of languages and narratives with which to contest reality, or from recognising the many intersections that traverse historical dynamics of oppression and privilege. Rather, it stems from the inherent individuation of the subject that also emanates from these discourses: the conception of identities and causes as an "all-you-can-take" buffet of self-contained compartments within self-contained compartments, and the creation of civil fronts that strive to articulate themselves at the most granular level, lacking both the capacity and the ambition for aggregation. Ironically, many of these counter-hegemonic discourses have led to the organisation of civil mobilisation priorities in a manner suspiciously accommodating to power. Consequently, progressive agendas across much of the world have been defined almost exclusively around symbolic issues during a period marked by material inequality and historic records of wealth concentration and rent extraction.

The Transformational Renunciation and the Collapse of Social Contracts

In the same way that fragmentation itself has disassembled civil mobilisation, the culture wars between the global left and right, far from being a mere fiction, have been instrumental as a political smokescreen. It is indisputable that decades of institutionalising progressive agendas have resulted in the enshrining of numerous rights for both minorities and social majorities across much of the world. However, from the eradication of institutional violence to feminist victories, these advances have rarely aspired to move beyond

punitive approaches, welfare hand-outs, and the outsourcing of social education. In many cases, they have also been overshadowed by their legal fragility and meagre budget allocations, if not, increasingly, by reactionary backlash.

While liberal progressivism and conservatism have, over recent decades, theatricalised the importance of the symbolic in their clashes, structural trends have set the pace for rising material inequality, with wealth becoming increasingly obscene and concentrated in the hands of a few. From intellectual circles, the symbolic battlefield has been framed as a correlative to—or even a precondition for—the material struggle; meanwhile, in practical terms, this counter-power has been assimilated and neutralised. While the leading social-democratic forces in contemporary politics chose to govern by headlines, blurring symbolic issues to the point of caricature and neglecting structural ones, global reactionary forces have gained a foothold and influence.

The reality is that social, material, and symbolic transformation requires both vision and significant political (and economic) effort. In the face of a social contract broken by growing inequality of opportunity and resources, it is entirely unsurprising that the lack of institutional response to the problems of our social majorities has degenerated into democratic disaffection and a distrust of symbolic progressivism, clearing the path for the return of reactionary thought.

The Reactionary Surge and the Hyper-Concentration of Wealth

Reactionary political programmes have proven to possess a double advantage: not only can they champion this disaffection to proclaim their legitimacy, but their spurious diagnoses and

false solutions are far more attractive to the powers that be. Singling out minorities and social progress in general as scapegoats for the system's dysfunctions allows for the rolling forward of extractive dynamics, the enrichment of their actors, and the consolidation of social conflict as a distraction—something already facilitated by the centre-left's lack of transformative will. This is evidenced not only by the shortage of significant new progress but also by the speed and effectiveness with which previous achievements are being rolled back. First, it was social protection policies, labour rights, and redistributive welfare states—following the neoliberal surge at the end of the last century, but becoming increasingly voracious since 2008. More recently, in the last few years, it has been the protection of minorities, humanitarian cooperation, pro-migration and refugee policies, and reproductive rights.

The presence of reactionary narratives has become entrenched in spheres ranging from mass media and emerging tech spaces to the growing brazenness of judicial activism. At the start of CAF's journey, scandals such as Cambridge Analytica and the first major cases of lawfare—such as that suffered by President Lula—brought the commodification of political influence into focus. Today, the coordinated weaponisation of media narratives and judicial performances has become almost commonplace, exacerbated on digital platforms in a loop of public legitimisation and disinformation that further emboldens its perpetrators.

The current situation in the United States illustrates the extent to which this cohabitation of interests can undermine the rule of law, with judges and legislators willing to renounce their accountability and to condone the arbitrary and political application of the law. This is compounded by a business elite that hides neither its role in

democratic dismantling nor the perks it extracts from it.

In summary, neoliberalism has dismantled the most promising models of wealth production and distribution to consolidate a capitalist oligarchy whose subjectivity extends to the general population. This has defined a political period that, for two decades now, some have come to term the "extreme centre". Today, the rise of the financialised economy coincides with the spread of political polarisation, fueled particularly by a global far-right. The latter, seeking to antagonise other political segments, does little more than promote a sorry public spectacle of distraction and sacrifice that ultimately protects those benefiting from extractive logics and historic highs in accumulation and inequality.

Neoliberalism, Securitisation, and Post-Truth

Despite its declared anti-globalist stance, the reactionary surge has also become internationalised, thanks to the impetus of these establishment powers. Neo-nationalism is politically profitable; however, in technical, ideological, and economic terms, the financiers and the capital supporting it no longer recognise borders.

Since the rise of neoliberalism, the voracious commodification of every facet of human life has become embedded in our systems, turning markets into increasingly volatile and speculative arenas. This has encouraged the concentration into oligopolies while fostering the proliferation of extractive intermediaries across all economic activity. The traditional banking model has given way to capital funds that, among other things, do not even aspire to have their debtors settle their accounts, but rather to keep them permanently in

"Innovation and the economy are wielded as weapons of geopolitical competition, pitted against genuine cooperation between peoples."

debt. Rent extraction has established itself as the norm, leading to a collapse in the purchasing power of social majorities and a cost-of-living crisis that has spread across the Global North, particularly in housing.

The promise of digital spaces as engines for active citizenship and emancipation has given way to a virtually dystopian reality, where the growth model for major tech companies is based on the mass sale of user data, disinformation echo chambers, and the development of platforms that are increasingly addictive and consumption-oriented. With market concentration and the digital transformation of traditional media, much of the civic narrative and independent journalism survives only on social media, yet algorithmic censorship is on the rise. The frameworks of legal exceptionalism and the securitisation policies that became widespread since the start of the century are also encouraging and normalising the technological commodification of social control, mass surveillance, and the suppression of dissent—not to mention the development of increasingly lethal weaponry, which we see regularly tested against civilian populations in places such as the West Bank and Gaza.

The securitarian drift reaches its ultimate expression in the drive for Artificial Intelligence development and technological accelerationism—with rhetoric that has begun to dangerously echo the rhetoric of the Manhattan Project. The new frontier for these corporations and the states that elevate them involves placing the stability of societies and economies at the service of an uncertain, potentially catastrophic scientific leap, driven by the fear that their rivals—chiefly China—might get there first. This fervour contrasts with the lack of political will and vision to mobilise available means against the climate catastrophe. As observed in the distribution of vaccines and Special Drawing Rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, innovation and the

economy are wielded as weapons of geopolitical competition, pitted against genuine cooperation between peoples, even in times of transnational emergency.

On the Global (Dis)Order

The world is witnessing an evident collapse of the hegemonic global order that emerged after the Second World War, enshrining the supremacy of the West following the end of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, we see rising global hostility, an increase in the virulence and frequency of climate disasters, and the subsequent ramifications of both. These tensions have pushed the legal and political principles that articulate multilateralism to a breaking point.

This scenario is but another episode in a sequence of international crossroads: the 2008 financial crisis and the imposition at any cost of austerity measures that weakened the social fabric and trust in Western democracies. The promise and collapse of the 2011 Arab Springs and the subsequent humanitarian catastrophe in the Levant, culminating in the 2016 European refugee crisis. The political and doctrinal shock of Trump's first term. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and its global consequences. The start of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2022. The attacks of 07th October 2023 and the onset of a new, openly genocidal operation against the Palestinian people. And the triumphant return of Donald Trump to the presidency in 2024, confirming an accelerated dismantling of American institutions, and the establishment of an international order in which hard power proclaims itself as the only thing that matters.

Disinformation and the rhetoric of security and dehumanisation have given rise to a world in rearmament, in which diplomacy and plausible deniability are no longer perceived as necessary,

"The extractivism and the plunder long experienced by the South are now also suffered by subjects and societies accustomed to privilege."

"Palestine symbolises the "coding error" par excellence: an exception so flagrant and that it calls into question the principles of the international political system and the triumphalist complacency of its tales of pacification and justice."

"The Zionist project has spurred and ideologically armed the reactionary surge, giving wings and technical means to supremacist political fantasies and authoritarian drifts."

and where many take for granted the failure of global institutions and the values that underpin them.

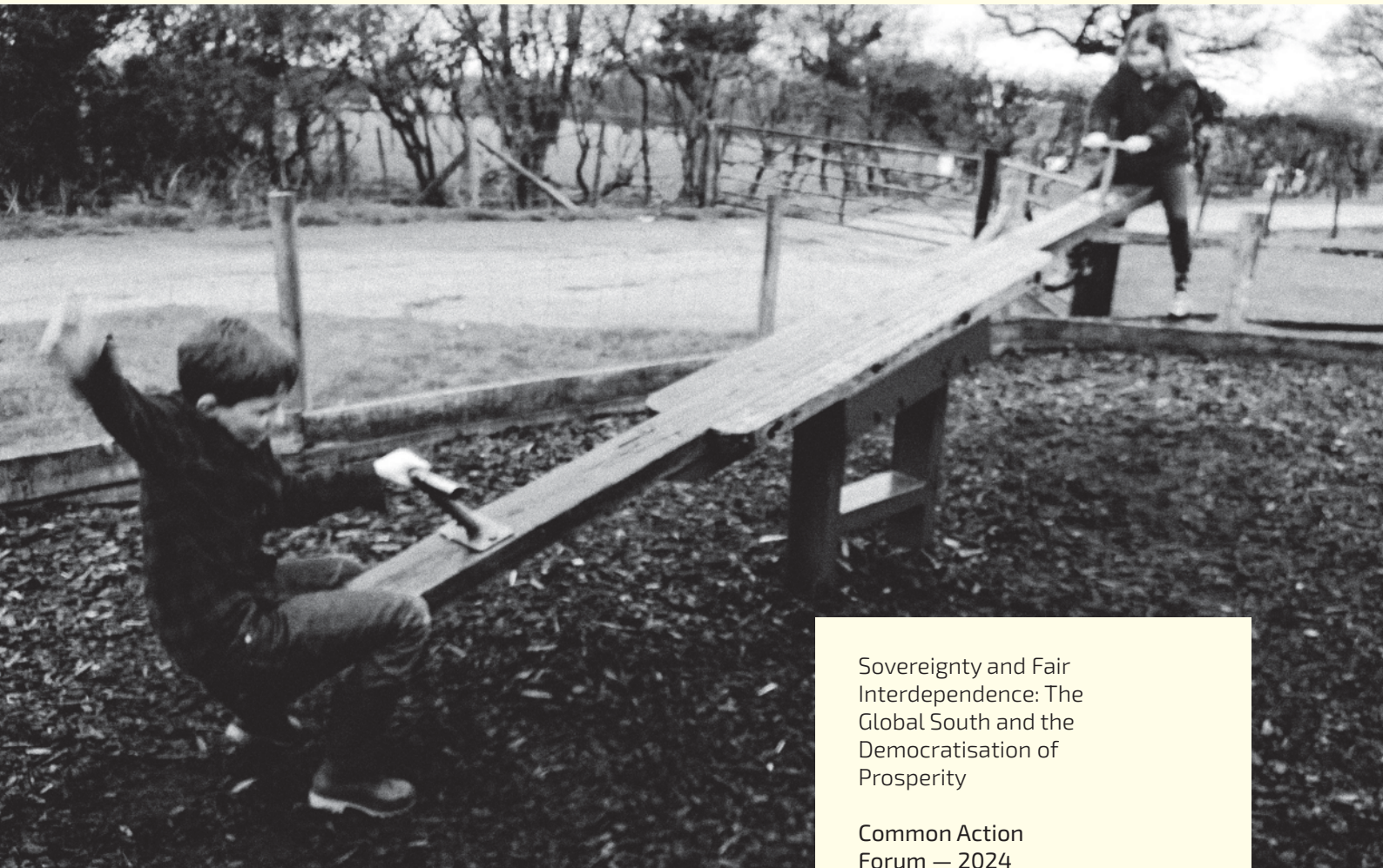
The United States, faced with the rapid structural decline of its global hegemony, is currently engaged in the selective demolition of the very organisational architecture it elevated. Seeking a selective return to the Monroe Doctrine and spheres of influence, as well as to a dangerous bilateralism, this intentional disorder has highlighted, among other things, the grave European strategic fragility of the last 35 years: a permanent subordination to American interests that has blocked its diplomatic autonomy and the possibility of more symmetrical relations between hemispheres.

Palestine as a Touchstone

All this complex symptomatology, along with the many factors omitted from this description, points to the same process of democratic, social, and conceptual dismantling. It seems indisputable that the emptying of notions such as justice, truth, and freedom—which articulate the historical narrative of Western institutions—has reached unprecedented levels. However, a large part of the global majority could rightly point out that the origin of this degradation lies in the model's foundational flaws. It is a starting condition that, in fact, has long captured ideals of justice, truth, and freedom to justify the narrative of power. Just as the opening lines of this reflection explored the coordinates of a conceptual epicentre for the socio-ecological and structural crises afflicting us, these dynamics of repression and resource extraction, now leading to the collapse of social pacts in the Global North, are merely a new facet of the expansion of extractivism and colonial violence. This is a plunder long experienced by the South, now also suffered by subjects and societies accustomed to privilege.

As has been consistently observed at the OCTAGON forum round tables since 2021, Palestine has become a touchstone testing the consistency of the liberal global order and its narrative. Its experience is not historically unique, yet it symbolises the "coding error" par excellence: an exception so flagrant and harrowing that it calls into question the guiding principles of the international political system and the triumphalist complacency of its tales of pacification and justice. The current genocide is not only the most advanced stage of the moral degeneration and of the systematic impunity of the Zionist hegemonic project; it constitutes the ultimate expression of a global order in which the upholding of laws and rights is at the discretion of their custodians. It is no coincidence that international law and the multilateral system are facing their greatest moment of discredit at the same time as Palestine suffers a second Nakba.

Tolerance with Israeli-American exceptionalism has not only facilitated neocolonial control and the permanent destabilisation of a naturally rich region, but it has also exported technologies, discourses, and political practices that have inoculated our own societies and legal systems with that same exceptionalism. From the adoption of civil control and mass surveillance technologies to legal chimaeras such as conditional citizenship, the Zionist project has spurred and ideologically armed the reactionary surge. It has given wings (and technical means) to supremacist political fantasies and authoritarian shifts, while also endorsing and equipping the persecution of social movements—those currently fighting for political responses to the climate crisis or the rise of institutional racism. Yet, it is precisely because of all it embodies—because it sits at this intersection of epistemic, socio-ecological, and structural crises—that the cause of Palestinian liberation holds an incomparable, as-yet-unleashed aggregating potential for social mobilisation.



Sovereignty and Fair
Interdependence: The
Global South and the
Democratisation of
Prosperity

Common Action
Forum — 2024

**10 years
of common action
2015 — 2025**

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Locating the Coordinates of the Common: A Manifesto for the Future

- CAF challenges the false dichotomies, short-termism, and zero-sum mentality that plague not only contemporary politics but also modern systems of meaning production. We call for a **paradigm shift**, for radical communication between communities and disciplines, and for the re-rooting of human ontology as a means to reinsert ourselves into the natural systems to which we have always belonged.
- For public life, we demand a **re-humanisation of the political as a practice, but also as a form of pragmatism**. The supposed utilitarianism of realpolitik has been a vehicle for cynicism and moral emptying, as well as to postpone existential decision-making. There is no politics more practical than that which guarantees the prosperity of our species and the ecosystem in which it is integrated.
- Accordingly, we do not call for de-globalisation; rather, we defend the necessity of a **local rooting alongside a transnationally coded political cooperation**. We advocate for a public management framework that prioritises proximity and tangibility, while linking human communities regardless of location—especially in the management of global commons and in addressing challenges that, like health and ecological crises, know no borders.
- For ten years, we have worked to promote the **refounding of notions such as economic development** and the indicators, interests, and belief systems that underpin them, in favour of community development systems centred on human well-being, social justice, and sustainability.
- Consequently, CAF advocates for an **urgent, fair, and agreed reform of the international architecture**, both politically and financially, with independent, universally oriented institutions and instruments of fair representation. These must have real capacity to address issues as diverse as the global debt crisis, conflict prevention, compliance with international law, climate coordination, economic justice, anti-cyclical resilience, and capital flight, among others.
- In this regard, we also assert the need for **international justice and public international law that are truly equipped for their purpose**, providing the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court with the instruments to ensure international accountability, arbitrate conflicts, and protect global citizenship, as well as ecosystems and the commons.
- With full awareness of the enormous difficulties entailed by international reform, we call for promoting **innovation within regional/minilateral political and economic cooperation spaces, particularly in the Global South**. New agreements, such as technology transfers, new monetary initiatives, or the integration of value chains, highlight the potential of organisations like the BRICS or ASEAN to design and test cooperation policies that can lay the groundwork for global models.
- From the undermining of the rule of law to democratic disaffection, the social instability threatening our democracies stems from a model that has naturalised the concentration of power, extreme inequality, and rent extraction. The current rise of reactionary and xenophobic movements is a response to their effective capitalisation on the material hardships of social majorities. In this sense, CAF advocates an urgent alliance of social, academic, and political actors to restore the centrality of redistributive and welfare policies, as well as to recognise citizen **participation as the democratic guarantor of accountability**.

- In the face of the barbarity and the grave ramifications of the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, and against the increase in violence and repression of social, trade union, and climate movements, CAF calls for **a global platform for citizen mobilisation**. This platform should aspire to integrate claims that are already intrinsically linked into a cross-cutting agenda and to aggregate their critical mass.
 - Faced with the globalisation of goods and capital that has not benefited human beings, and in order to consolidate universalism and human rights—especially those of migrants—we call for a **reimagining of citizenship**, or even the **implementation of a global citizenship status** capable of refounding cosmopolitanism.
 - From digital platforms to mass media, the primary channels of contemporary social communication are controlled by transnational conglomerates and opaque interests. As the main contemporary driver of scientific innovation, Private Capital is largely focused on advances that are indifferent or even contrary to the general interest. CAF advocates for **industrial planning and the expansion of the public role and public capital in technological innovation**, as well as for **regulatory frameworks that protect citizens both in digital spaces and from institutional persecution** of social mobilisation and political dissent.
 - In the face of all these challenges, CAF asserts the **potential of the Global South as a non-aligned pole in its commitment to peace and the renewal of current multilateralism**. This is in favour of a global order based on cooperation and consistent with multipolar reality, but, above all, as a precursor to a civilisational transformation. The challenge lies in reconciling the vast diversity of the South with its common interests, consolidating a democratic front for the rights of the global majorities against the geopolitics of injustice, and promoting balance and mediation between major powers.
- We advocate for the **importance of the Global North's peripheries, such as the European Mediterranean nations, in driving an agenda for the South**. Since its founding, CAF has promoted a notion of the South focused on its potential as a bridge between experiences, seeking to overcome historical categories without disregarding structural realities. The South thus presents itself not merely as a hemisphere, a sideline, or a subordinate entity, but as an opportunity for transformation—a space in which to search for those coordinates of the “common” to begin building the “impossible”.



Photo Gallery





























