

# UNA \_UK

3 // 2016

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## FACTS STILL MATTER

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PERSPECTIVES

### THE 'POST-TRUTH' FACTOR

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FEATURE

### THE NEXT SECRETARY-GENERAL

Sam Daws

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ESSAYS

### TEN YEARS OF BAN KI-MOON

Barbara Crossette

### GLOBAL BRITAIN

Matthew Rycroft

ISSN 2399-3030



UNA-UK

## The United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) is the only charity in the UK devoted to building support for the UN amongst policy-makers and the public.

We believe that a strong, credible and effective UN is essential if we are to build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. We push for government support for the UN, find ways to make it work better, and demonstrate why it matters to people everywhere.

Our members, supporters and local groups form a powerful network of global citizens with impact in the UK and beyond. Together, we've fought for more British peacekeepers, for children to learn about the UN at school and for a more transparent process to appoint the UN Secretary-General.

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Cover image: Egyptian photographer Mahmoud Abdel Shakour, known as Shawkan, gestures from inside a soundproof glass dock during his trial on 9 August 2016 © KHALED DESOUKI/AFP/Getty Images

### UNA-UK magazine is published by UNA-UK

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Disclaimer //  
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Subscription //  
UNA-UK magazine is included in the UNA-UK membership fee.

Design and layout // Soapbox  
[www.soapbox.co.uk](http://www.soapbox.co.uk)



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**UNA-UK**

UK action  
Stronger UN  
Better world

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// A Syrian woman mourns relatives killed by air strikes on Aleppo on 20 November 2016  
© Jawad al Rifai/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images



# FACTS STILL MATTER, BUT SO DO FEELINGS

How should we respond to 'post-truth' politics?

**NATALIE SAMARASINGHE // UNA-UK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**A**fter a year of fretting about 'post-truth' politics (pages 8–10), attacks on journalists serve as a tragic reminder that facts still matter. Our cover features Shawkan – an Egyptian photojournalist arrested after documenting security forces' violence against protestors in 2013. Three years on, he is still in jail, facing the death penalty.

From Russia's dismissal of Syrian war crimes accusations to the UK's insistence that its arms aren't harming Yemeni civilians, government obfuscation is hardly new. Neither is public support for leaders who espouse violence. Two thousand years after Nero, Rolando Duterte enjoys high approval ratings in the Philippines, despite urging citizens to kill drug dealers

(hundreds have reportedly complied) and saying he would be "happy to slaughter" addicts.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't worry. Today's media environment provides fertile ground for post-truth peddlers. While social media has received much attention, it is mainstream outlets that amplify politicians' spin and make it difficult to dislodge narratives.

In the UK, for example, few people fall neatly within the post-EU-referendum fault lines that have dominated news coverage. People from all walks of life, including many who voted 'leave', are deeply concerned by efforts to undermine experts, and to interpret the referendum as a mandate for xenophobia (pages 6 and

26). In Sri Lanka, the previous regime demonstrated how devastating post-truth policies can be: the framing of its slaughter of civilians as a humanitarian operation continues to thwart efforts to bring perpetrators to justice.

Our inter-connected world also offers opportunities for the somewhat oxymoronic concept of a transnational alliance of nationalists, banding together to undermine the international system at a time when it is already under strain.

While Donald Trump is yet to set out a foreign policy vision, US leadership on bodies such as the Human Rights Council and on issues like peacekeeping and climate change is likely to change. Even a positive reading of increased cooperation with Russia, which may bring solutions to specific problems, could see the UN bypassed and further destabilise big power relations.

The EU, too, may no longer have the appetite to act as a progressive driver at the UN. There have been worrying shifts, particularly on human rights, in several EU states, and the bloc's fundamental principles have been challenged by the refugee crisis and populist movements. And many African states are finding new ways to express their dissatisfaction with an international system that marginalises their input, by seeking to withdraw from the International Criminal Court, for example, or to block the appointment of the UN's first LGBT special rapporteur.

So how should we respond? For UNA-UK, a key international priority has been to campaign for the best possible person to succeed Ban Ki-moon as UN Secretary-General (pages 16–17). We believe that we have found just that in António Guterres (pages 11–15).

Like his predecessors, he will inherit a UN that is overstretched and underfunded. He will have no power to compel states to act differently, and he will need their support to be effective. But if he achieves this balancing act, he has the potential to be a powerful voice that transcends divisive national interests. And we believe that his hand has been strengthened by the more open and inclusive selection process that UNA-UK played a role in securing (see Lord Wood below) – proof that even tiny NGOs can have global impact, with the support of people like you.

Mr Guterres has the opportunity to set an ambitious but realistic vision for the UN, which sees it focus on areas where it can make a unique contribution – notably by reclaiming a central role in peace and security. This should include strengthening the UN’s mediation capacity, with the Secretary-General leading a surge in diplomacy.

Achieving this will require the UN to step back from areas where other actors are arguably better placed to deliver. Sustainable development and climate change are the obvious examples. Having helped to create the frameworks, the UN should now focus on assisting and monitoring states, recognising that they must drive implementation. This would allow UN agencies to concentrate on humanitarian emergencies, where extra capacity is sorely needed. The Secretary-General cannot overhaul the development system, but he can push for bold action to do so.

We also urge Mr Guterres to resist states’ efforts to foist incompetent politicians onto the UN. He cannot be all things

to all people; he will need a talented and diverse senior management group to support him. And while his decade as High Commissioner for Refugees showed that he is more than capable of speaking truth to power, he cannot overuse the bully pulpit. Others will need to take up that mantle. This will mean improving the UN’s communications infrastructure, which states should see as a necessary investment at this time.

UNA-UK stands ready to support Mr Guterres as he takes on the world’s most impossible job. A crucial part of our work will be encouraging the UK to be a global force for good, and building public support for a principled and pro-active foreign policy (pages 22–23 and 24).

As you read this new-look issue of our magazine, please consider making a donation in support of our work: [una.org.uk/donate](http://una.org.uk/donate). It is easy to feel powerless at times like these but we must never forget that we, the people, can make a difference. For better and for worse, 2016 demonstrated that. //

*Mr Guterres is more than capable of speaking truth to power, but he cannot overuse the bully pulpit*

#### LORD WOOD OF ANFIELD // UNA-UK CHAIRMAN

2016 will be remembered as a year of momentous change and momentous challenges. But one change reflects an extraordinary success for UNA-UK’s *1 for 7 Billion* campaign. In October, former Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres was confirmed as the next UN Secretary-General, following the most transparent contest for the post in UN history. UNA-UK led the push for a more open, inclusive and meritocratic selection process – to enable people across the world to examine the candidates’ ideas and engage with them directly. As US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power recognised, Guterres’ selection owed a great deal to his “breakthrough” moment at the General Assembly candidate hearing.

As the Guterres era begins, our attention must now shift to ensuring that the UN fights to become more effective in the midst of ever-mounting challenges. The UN Secretary-General has no direct power over member states. He relies on moral authority, soft power and his ability to build alliances. UNA-UK, along with other supportive organisations, has a crucial role to play here, in particular in

making the case for the voices of global citizens to be louder, and to be heard clearly at the UN. In the coming weeks, we will be setting out our priorities for Mr Guterres, including on how the UN can engage more with civil society.

We are also going to work hard on an agenda called *Keeping Britain Global* – to insist that the UK Government remains engaged in the world, living up to its international obligations and forging a new leadership role across the security, economic, development, environmental and human rights agendas.

We are under no illusion that this will be easy. As Owen Jones observes in this publication, recent months have seen the rise of competing aggressive nationalisms across the world. These movements have found success by answering people’s concerns about economic insecurity and their anger against political elites with a politics of blame, and recommending a retreat from international engagement (and international institutions) in favour of asserting national interests against the rest of the world. The oxygen that enables this nationalism to thrive in the West is

in part the failure of mainstream politics to sustain a genuinely shared prosperity. But it also thrives on the use of social media to amplify myths and prejudices about minorities.

In days such as these, those of us who believe that a more secure world depends on strengthening international cooperation have a fight on our hands. But it is a fight that UNA-UK is ready to have. We need to counter the pessimism of post-truth politics with the optimism of people-centred politics. The appeal of nationalism is the antidote it claims to provide in an era of rampant globalisation, when many feel as though politics has become the pastime of an elite detached from the national interest. We must present an alternative that involves reconnecting our political institutions – national and international – to the people they serve.

Now is the moment to examine the rise of post-truth politics, and the reasons for its appeal. I hope you enjoy what our authors have to say, and that it inspires you to think of how you can play a part in our work. //

*In this feature, UNA-UK lets facts and figures speak for themselves*

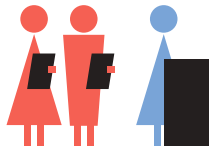
## POST-TRUTH

Oxford Dictionaries' word of the year, defined as an adjective "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief".

**Usage increased by around 2,000% in 2016** compared to last year, with the dictionaries' editors attributing the spike to "the EU referendum in the UK and the presidential election in the US".

## FACTS STILL MATTER...

85%



of people want politicians to consult professionals and experts when making difficult decisions

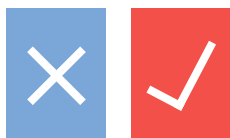
83%



want government to make decisions based on objective evidence

Polling by Populus in 2016 for the Institute for Government, UK. The figures are a slight increase on 2014 results for the same questions, and show almost no difference in responses from those who voted to leave the EU and those who voted to remain.

110



Over the past decade, some 110 fact-checking groups have emerged in over 50 countries – nearly half within the last two years

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016.

## IT'S WHAT WE DO WITH THEM

Much has been made of the role of social media 'echo chambers' in shaping voter opinions this year. But our minds fulfil a similar function, filtering information in ways that can reinforce existing views. Below, we feature different types of cognitive bias that can arise when we try to process facts and figures.

## TOO MUCH INFORMATION

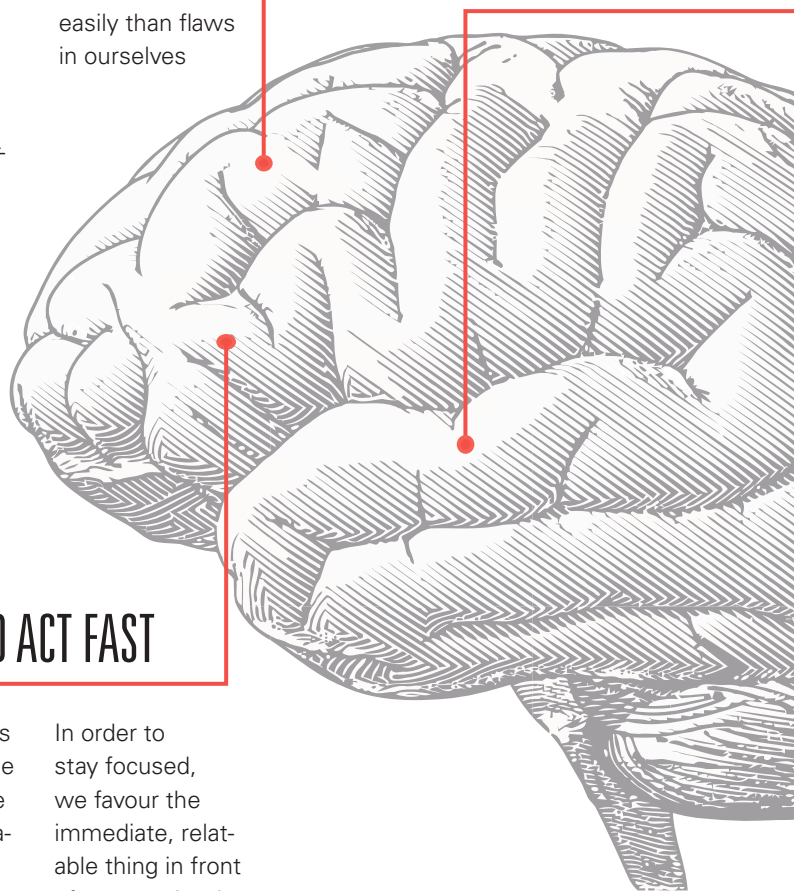
We notice things that are already primed in memory or repeated often

We are drawn to details that confirm our own existing beliefs

We notice when something has changed

We notice flaws in others more easily than flaws in ourselves

Bizarre, funny, visually striking and anthropomorphic things stand out more



## THE NEED TO ACT FAST

We favour options that appear simple or that have more complete information over more complex, ambiguous options

In order to stay focused, we favour the immediate, relatable thing in front of us over the delayed and distant

To avoid mistakes, we're motivated to preserve our autonomy and status in a group, and to avoid irreversible decisions

And to feel like we're getting things done, we're motivated to complete tasks into which we've already invested time and energy

Categorisation of different types of cognitive bias by Buster Benson, Slack Technologies. Data via Wikipedia.

## NOT ENOUGH MEANING

We find stories and patterns even in sparse data

We simplify probabilities and numbers to make them easier to think about

We believe things and people we're familiar with or fond of are better than others

We think we know what others are thinking

We project our current mindset and assumptions onto the past and future

We fill in characteristics from stereotypes, generalities, and prior histories whenever there are new specific instances or gaps in information

## DECIDING WHAT TO REMEMBER

We discard specifics to form generalities

We reduce events and lists to their key elements

We edit and reinforce some memories after the fact

We store memories differently based on how they were experienced

## AND WHO DELIVERS THEM

### UK public trust in:



MORI poll, December 2015 to January 2016.

## THE FACT-FEELING GAP

In 2005, US television host Stephen Colbert used the word "truthiness" to describe the quality of seeming or being felt to be true, even if not. Here are three examples:

**The refugee crisis is a European problem**

Of all the refugees worldwide under the UN Refugee Agency's mandate:

- **6% are in Europe**
- 86% are in developing countries
- 26% are in least-developed countries

**The US spends too much on aid**

Each year, the Kaiser Family Foundation polls the US public on foreign aid spending. In 2015, it found that on average, Americans believe aid makes up 31 per cent of the federal budget. **Just one in 33 correctly state that it is under one per cent.**

In 2016, it found that half of Americans think the US is spending too much on aid. Upon hearing the actual amount, that number dropped to a third.

**Climate change isn't really happening yet ... and we can't do anything about it anyway**

**Three years in a row:**

- **Hottest year on record**
- **Stalled growth in carbon emissions**

At the UN climate summit in Morocco, the World Meteorological Organization reported that 2016 is very likely to be the hottest year on record and a new high for the third year in a row. Another report, by the UEA Tyndall Centre, showed that some progress in tackling carbon emissions is being made, with growth in 2016 at similar minimal levels as the two previous years.



## OWEN JONES

Owen Jones is a columnist and the author of *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*

## INTERNATIONALISM

'Post-truth politics' is a term that needs scrutiny. Sometimes it seems to express the bewilderment of those on the losing side of politics, who don't examine their own failures and instead blame mass delusion on the part of the great unwashed. But there is no question that prejudices and myths are being zealously exploited by powerful politicians and media moguls – and that this poses a threat to the entire international order.

In the aftermath of the financial crash – just as after the Wall Street Crash – politics across the West has polarised. We are, thankfully, not confronted (yet) by the full horror of totalitarian fascism. Instead, we are experiencing 1930s-lite: the rise of populist, xenophobic movements with an authoritarian bent, from Hungary to the US, from Poland to Britain. The danger is a world dominated by competing aggressive nationalisms – all exploiting prejudices and myths

that are useful in shoring up domestic support but destabilising on the global stage.

Social media has allowed for the democratisation of news. But it has also facilitated the proliferation of fake content: Facebook is awash with stories with no factual basis. Many of the new nationalist movements have benefited from this phenomenon. Whether it's Donald Trump blaming Mexican immigrants or Muslims for the multiple problems facing US society, or Brexit rhetoric that amounts to shaking fists at the rest of the world, the trend is undoubtedly towards retreating inwards. Those who call for more global cooperation are dismissed as liberal elitists, weak and unpatriotic. Those who believe in peace, or international action to deal with tax avoidance and climate change, have a fight on their hands – but the future of humanity depends on our success. //

## MICHAEL MØLLER

Michael Møller is Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

## THE UNITED NATIONS

The refugee and migrant crisis, the horrific conflict in Syria and the threat of terrorism are all things we hear about on a daily basis through the media. At the same time, within the international development community, hot topics being discussed also include gender equality, the Sustainable Development Goals and innovation. Sadly, they are not making the headlines.

We are not getting the full picture. Dedicated civil servants in UN agencies are working harder than ever to help the world's most vulnerable people, with a heavier caseload, dwindling resources and in increasingly difficult circumstances. Many of those on the frontline are becoming targets of violence themselves. Paradoxically, media coverage of their work generally highlights the perpetuity of these crises, feeding perceptions that solutions are nowhere in sight. Consequently, the UN and its partners are connected

to these pessimistic stories in people's minds, creating a negative perception of the organisation.

This is why the UN Office in Geneva launched the *Perception Change Project*. The goal is to show the relevance and impact of the work collectively done by Geneva's unique concentration of institutions, knowledge and resources. Together, they form an ecosystem around international development and humanitarian action, as well as health, trade, human rights, telecommunications, intellectual property, labour rights, disarmament and migration. It includes the UN, other international organisations, over 400 NGOs, think tanks, academia and businesses. Geneva is to international development what Silicon Valley is to internet start-ups. It is the global operational hub for international action – and the world needs to know about it. //

// Images above: REUTERS/Alamy // Metropolitico.org/Flickr // Xinhua/Alamy Stock Photo // eps european pressphoto agency b.v./Alamy // GCIS/ Government ZA/Flickr // ITAR/TASS Photo Agency/Alamy // European Union 2015 – European Parliament/Flickr



# TRUTH FACTOR



## ISABELLE YOUNANE

Isabelle Younane is Campaigns and Communications Officer at UNA-UK

## DIPLOMACY

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein stunned his audience into silence at The Hague this September when he branded Geert Wilders and “his acolytes” as “demagogues”, who appeal to fear and prejudice as a means of winning power. In a subsequent speech at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, Zeid again spoke “the bitter truth” to an audience perhaps not used to hearing it, criticising those who oppose greater shared responsibility for victims of forced migration.

The latter speech had, at the time of writing, received 94,383 views on Facebook, suggesting that ‘truth’ – honest opinion – is not a frequent caller at Turtle Bay. Diplomacy and deal-making are the *modi operandi*, as states are intensely aware of the political costs of falling out with their allies.

This is a necessary evil. The rules-based international order depends on states abiding by self-imposed

laws – from upholding human rights to respecting state sovereignty. Freezing out a state because it fails to comply with a certain provision of international law could result in a UN that is reserved for the obedient few. This would be damaging for the UN’s legitimacy and universality.

However, a balance must be struck. In the run-up to the appointment of a new Secretary-General, UNA-UK asked its supporters which quality they felt was most important in the next UN chief. Top of the list was “speak truth to power”, suggesting that in order to serve the world’s people, the UN must reconcile its reliance on cooperation with its duty to hold states to account. With a new Secretary-General who has been an outspoken advocate for the vulnerable, there’s reason to hope that others will follow Zeid’s lead. //

## EMMA BRIANT

Emma Briant is a Lecturer in Journalism Studies at the University of Sheffield and co-author of *Bad News for Refugees*

## MEDIA

The far right has become emboldened. This year, we have seen coverage of refugees and migrants – already extremely negative – stoop to new lows amid the hateful rhetoric and misinformation during the Brexit media campaign. With the executive chairman of the so-called ‘alt-right’ website *Breitbart News* now in the White House as Donald Trump’s chief strategist, extreme narratives are likely to gain even greater power and legitimacy.

Hateful propaganda has led many to question whether we have suddenly plunged into a post-truth world. Sadly, this overlooks the reality that fact-free news, selective and misleading coverage and fearmongering are not new. We have already seen its dangerous consequences: the increase in hate crimes in the UK since the EU referendum and Nazi graffiti in the US following Trump’s election.

It is therefore vital that the media also tell stories of generosity and compassion, and highlight the positive narrative of successful refugee journeys and how refugees contribute to the communities that host them. Reporting of integration difficulties should be accompanied by integration successes, and questions to policy-makers on how to replicate them.

Social media campaigns can force mainstream outlets to cover absent issues (see #SomeoneTellCNN and #LetAymanReport). But these platforms have also been exploited. Marine Le Pen was quick to cheer Trump’s victory on Twitter, and the press quick to report on it, inflating her voice. She was then given a platform to speak on the BBC’s *Andrew Marr Show* on Remembrance Sunday. The normalisation of marginal and extreme views is becoming all too familiar. We urgently need to campaign for more balanced coverage or extremists will hijack the debate. //

**ROBERT WORCESTER**

Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL is the founder of MORI, a leading polling, public affairs and research company

**POLLING**

If you go to the races, your eyes tell you which horse is ahead, which is behind, and which is likely to win. During elections, the polls are your eyes at the track. After Trump's victory in the US and Brexit in the UK, many are asking: how could the polls get it so wrong? Answer: they didn't. If two voters in a hundred in the swing states of Pennsylvania, Florida and Michigan had voted for Clinton, not Trump, she'd be President-elect. Again, two voters in a hundred voting 'stay', not 'leave', and Brexit would be dead. Both elections were that close.

Properly conducted public opinion polls are systematic and objective. It is when they get into the hands of spin doctors, and poll-naïve journalists and pundits who have their own axes to grind, that they become a threat to democracy.

I'm sometimes asked if polls are "rigged" and I say "not if the polling organisation wants to stay in business". Pollsters have every incentive to get it right. The tools that they have to assess the state of the nation are limited by the laws of statistics, yet media expectations (and therefore people's expectations) are that they are gospel or, if proved fallible, useless. Polls depend on what people say, and – despite the much-discussed phenomenon of 'shy' Trumpists and Brexiteers – most people tell the truth.

Provided the polls model the universe accurately, draw a representative sample, reach the randomly selected people in the sample and ask the right questions, aggregate their answers accurately, and report their collective responses with objectivity, polls can tell you what the public is thinking. If the answers are worrying, it's not the pollsters who are to blame. //

**GEORGE MARSHALL**

George Marshall is the co-founder of Climate Outreach and the author of *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

This is the ultimate post-truth issue. There is no other on which people's attitudes diverge so strongly from the underlying scientific evidence, and which is more starkly divided along political lines, enabling many intelligent conservatives to deny the overwhelming evidence.

Maybe, as some cognitive psychologists suggest, climate change feels so inherently distant in time and place that it lends itself to this kind of bias. But my research has led me to argue that the problem lies with the cultural narratives that liberal environmentalists like myself have projected. We have done such a good job of championing climate change that we have shaped it in our own image, so people who do not share our world view find it very easy to ignore or reject.

At Climate Outreach, the communications organisation I co-founded 10 years ago, we are dedicated

to speaking to new audiences, including political conservatives and people of faith. We are convinced there are many fresh ways to energise people by appealing to their own values.

Article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change calls upon governments to educate the general public. They have failed to fulfil this commitment. Future social, and with it political, action can only come through broad-based public engagement. But this cannot be achieved through scientific education alone. Although evidence and data are a critical foundation for action, ultimately we only become motivated by a sense of our shared identity. Empowering and compelling narratives can only come from seeing climate change as an issue that binds us together: through our national and cultural pride, concern for our families and communities, and a sense of shared humanity. //

**SIMON MOSS**

Simon Moss is a co-founder of Global Citizen and currently its Managing Director of Campaigns

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Extreme poverty rates have plummeted, more kids are getting a quality education and clean water is reaching almost all people. We're on the brink of eradicating guinea worm and polio, and child deaths have more than halved in the last generation.

But, in much of the world, that positive picture doesn't match how we feel. This dissonance between fact and feeling is nothing new in global development circles. For those of us brought up on a steady diet of 'flies in their eyes' fundraising ads, benefit concerts and telethons, the idea that things are getting worse has strong emotional resonance.

In the development community, we've spent much of the last five years seeking to address this. Comic Relief has sought to make us cry with happiness, not sadness. Bill Gates has gone to parliaments with his

*Living Proof* campaign that demonstrates the progress we've made. And at Global Citizen, we've inverted the benefit gig by giving tickets away to those who take actions that lead to real commitments. Our recent show in London helped unlock an additional £100m in UK aid for girls' education.

When shaping public debate, it's never been just about facts. And now more than ever, feelings come first. If we continue to sell a story of dire need, the public will conclude that development doesn't work. Not everyone is interested in the detail of development policy, but most people care a lot about whether they feel proud of their country, and whether their efforts make a difference. And that's our challenge now – to take our collective facts, and link them back to the feelings that have always driven politics. //

FEATURE



# THE NEXT UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

# *The challenges and opportunities facing António Guterres*

**Sam Daws**

**A**ntónio Guterres' appointment defied expectations since he is neither female nor Eastern European. After eight male Secretaries-General, many UN commentators had called for a woman to be selected for the UN's top job. Others, particularly from Eastern European countries fielding candidates, claimed it was their region's "turn".

Guterres prevailed for reasons of performance and politics. The UNA-UK-inspired *1 for 7 Billion* campaign helped secure a more transparent auditioning process. Candidates submitted CVs and vision statements before being publicly grilled for two hours by the UN's members. This showcased Guterres' ability to perform under pressure, his sophisticated grasp of international affairs, and his extensive relevant experience. He benefited from the fact that the most experienced female contenders – Helen Clark of New Zealand and Susana Malcorra of Argentina – were also from outside Eastern Europe.

Political factors ultimately sealed Guterres' victory. As well as being Prime Minister of Portugal he served for six years as President of the Socialist International. He thus appealed to the West as a NATO- and EU-country national, whilst Russia and China liked that he was of the left and worried that if the race were to run on, states might coalesce around an Eastern European candidate who was right of centre politically – such as Kristalina Georgieva, a belated Bulgarian nominee, who had overseen EU sanctions on Russia.

Guterres also had strong developing-country backing. Latin America warmed to a candidate who could speak Spanish and Portuguese, while Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau galvanised support beyond Lusophone Africa. The G77 group of developing countries has long complained that nearly three decades after the Cold War's end, UN bodies still reserve separate seats for the 'Eastern European' and 'Western European and Others' groups. They hoped the precedent of Guterres' appointment would erode this convention. Choosing a fourth (out of nine) Secretary-General from Western Europe also makes it unlikely that there will be another appointment from that region for the next half-century.

Sexism may have played its part, with elderly male ambassadors and foreign ministers key to nominations. While many of us were disappointed that a woman was not chosen, progress has been made. Half the candidates nominated in 2016 were female. Previously, only three women had been formally considered. The Soviet Union proposed India's Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in 1953 after Trygve Lie's resignation from office, Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway was 'written in' on a private Security Council ballot in 1991, and Latvia nominated its President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga in 2006. I predict that in 2026 a female Secretary-General from Latin America or the Caribbean will be appointed.

// Previous page: UN Secretary-General António Guterres  
© Reuters/Denis Balibouse/Alamy

Gender aside, the UN has made a superb choice. Guterres has integrity, charisma and political agility – and should serve the international community well. Here are some key challenges and opportunities he will have to navigate:

- 1. People matter.** Guterres must retain and attract dynamic staff. This requires a transformation of UN knowledge sharing, training and managerial systems. He must also identify and cultivate supportive ambassadors and government ministers from diverse member states to ensure governing bodies remain onside as he reforms.
- 2. Harnessing innovation.** Ban Ki-moon has said that this generation is the first in humanity's history with the capacity to end endemic poverty, and the last with the chance to halt catastrophic climate change. To meet both challenges the UN will need to harness the ongoing revolution in science, technology, engineering and medicine, with human ingenuity transforming the tools available to solve global challenges. A statistics and data revolution is needed to evaluate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), harnessing

smartphone technology, social media and crowdsourcing. Guterres will need to adapt the UN's ambition, structures and ways of working.

- 3. Resourcing the SDGs and climate action.** Foreign investment, remittances, and domestic taxation already dwarf traditional aid as the financial drivers of development. This trend will continue, and with it comes an opportunity for the UN to harmonise the contributions of old and new actors, such as governments, the private sector, NGOs, foundations, city governments and regional organisations. Guiding and providing legitimacy to such diverse partnerships will likely overtake the UN's own operational delivery. Harnessing trillions in investment for low-carbon and pro-poor renewable energy infrastructure in developing countries is possible if sovereign wealth, pension and insurance funds can de-risk those investments, especially currency exchange risks. The UN, the Bretton Woods institutions, the regional development banks and the new Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank can help unlock such flows.

## YOUR UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

**In 2013, UNA-UK co-founded the 1 for 7 Billion campaign for a more open, inclusive and – above all – merit-based process to find the best possible person to lead the United Nations and represent the hopes of the world's seven billion people. We believe that our campaign succeeded.**

**The new selection process enabled strong candidates to shine and piqued global interest in the UN – nearly 200 million people were part of our movement. And the eventual appointee is a seasoned diplomat, with a strong track record in management and a reputation for speaking truth to power. Below, we summarise his background for our readers:**

António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres was born in Lisbon in 1949, and graduated from the city's Instituto Superior Técnico with a degree in engineering.

He was UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 2005 to 2015, heading one of the world's foremost humanitarian agencies with approximately 10,000 staff working in some 125 countries. His tenure coincided with the biggest global displacement crisis since records began, as the number of people forced to flee their homes rose from 38 million to more than 60 million in a decade.

During this time, Guterres oversaw a tripling in the activities of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as well as profound organisational reforms: paring back staff

at its Geneva headquarters and locating them closer to the point of need; raising money from new sources, including the private sector; and diverting funding from administration to operations. He is credited with increasing UNHCR's cost effectiveness and emergency response capacity. Under his watch, the agency became one of just a handful of UN entities to reach gender parity in senior positions.

Before joining UNHCR, Guterres spent some 30 years in government and public service. He was first elected to the Portuguese Parliament in 1976 and served as Prime Minister from 1995 to 2002, during which time he was heavily involved in the international effort to resolve the crisis in East Timor. As President of the European Council in 2000, he co-chaired the first European Union-Africa summit. From 1981 to 1983, he was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where his roles included chairing the Committee on Demography, Migration and Refugees. He was also active in the Socialist International, serving as its President from 1999 to 2005.

He is currently a member of the Club of Madrid, a leadership alliance of democratic former presidents and prime ministers from around the world. He is fluent in Portuguese, English, French and Spanish.

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For more information on the next Secretary-General, and UNA-UK commentary on the selection process and outcome, see [www.una.org.uk/magazine](http://www.una.org.uk/magazine)

*“In times of insecurity, when people feel uncertain about their future, when anxieties and fears are promoted and exploited by political populists, old-fashioned nationalists or religious fundamentalists, the success of the UN and the international community lies in our common commitment to our common values. The UN must be proud of its diversity. A diversity that only enriches the strength of the expression of our common humanity”*

António Guterres, vision statement for the UN

4. **Ensuring the integrity of human rights.** Guterres faces an international human rights regime under pressure. Whilst Russia lost its seat on the UN Human Rights Council over Syria, Saudi Arabia was re-elected despite atrocities in Yemen. Guterres will have been alarmed by African countries’ attempt to revisit the Council’s appointment of an LGBT rights expert, as well as moves by South Africa and Burundi to withdraw from the International Criminal Court.
5. **Migration.** Guterres’ passion for humanitarian action will likely permeate his approach in office. He will no doubt advocate for innovative solutions that enable refugees to contribute economically to their host countries without disadvantaging host communities. He is also likely to urge member states to invest in addressing the root causes of forced migration – natural disasters, conflict and climate change.
6. **Evolving threats.** Guterres inherits a UN that has evolved sophisticated and successful conflict management tools. But its response to regionalised conflict, terrorist movements, organised crime and cyber threats has not kept pace with the transnational and evolving nature of these challenges. Integrating UN development and peace mechanisms to sustain peace will require shifts in culture and new incentives for collaboration. The UN must overcome its traditional blind spot to the political economies of conflict. Guterres can encourage a greater Security Council focus on the political objectives of peace operations, and increased investment in mediation and other conflict prevention tools, along with taking forward the recommendations of the Global Study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
7. **Changing power realities.** The world faces shifting sands in political power. Guterres must manage great power tensions between the US, Russia and China. President Trump’s election will likely lead to a greater US prioritisation of state sovereignty over democracy and human rights concerns. It may lead to a warming of ties between the US and Russia. Whether this paves the way for a settlement in the appalling Syrian civil war, and on what terms, remains to be seen. Guterres must also find ways to accommodate the aspirations of rising powers – such as India, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and China – for greater influence on the UN’s direction. China is now the second largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping and the third largest contributor to the UN’s regular budget. China also contributes more personnel to UN peace operations than the other Security Council permanent members combined.
8. **African agency.** There is discontent in Africa with an international system that appears to give scant agency to African countries. Guterres should leave the stalled Security Council

# UNA-UK PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mr Guterres will take up his post at a time when an overstretched and underfunded UN is constantly asked to do more with less, with little sign of greater political or financial support. Like his predecessors, he will not have any powers to compel states to change their behaviour or increase their support to the UN.

Throughout the selection process, there were calls for the next Secretary-General to focus on a dizzying number of issues, and to be not only the world's top diplomat, but also an inspiring communicator, a voice for the poor, a hard-headed reform driver, a negotiator and more. Mr Guterres will need to prioritise.

UNA-UK has set out its suggestions to the House of Lords International Relations Committee and to Mr Guterres' transition team. They include:

- Setting an ambitious but realistic vision that sees the UN focus on areas where it can make a unique contribution – notably resuming a central role in peace and security
- Actively seeking to improve big power relations, which are hindering the UN's ability to address pressing conflict and humanitarian situations
- Taking a hands-on approach in conflict negotiations and strengthening the UN's mediation capacity, including through the appointment of female mediators
- Pressing ahead with last year's reform reports on peace operations, peacebuilding, and women, peace and security
- Calling for an international accountability mechanism to address sexual abuse by peacekeepers
- Developing a clear plan for the UN's contribution to implementing the SDGs and Paris Agreement. This should focus on encouraging, advising and monitoring states, and be accompanied by proposals for moving the UN away from the direct provision of development services towards reinforcing its humanitarian response capacity
- Working with states and the UN system to flesh out the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants
- Creating concrete plans for taking forward the Human Rights up Front initiative, including by strengthening communication and referral channels between different parts of the UN system
- Creating concrete plans for improving gender equality and women's representation within the UN system, starting with the appointment of a diverse and highly qualified senior management group
- Capitalising on civil society and public engagement with the UN as a result of the new Secretary-General selection process, including by appointing a high-level focal point for civil society

reform negotiations to member states, but he can usefully encourage new ways of working that empower the three African members of the Security Council to feel more ownership of Council decisions, and build the capacity of African Union institutions and peace operations.

**9. A US shift away from multilateralism.** It is unlikely that we will see wholesale US disengagement from the UN. President Trump is likely to relish the opportunities that his speaking slot at the opening of the UN General Assembly's annual sessions and the US seat on the UN Security Council provide for expressing his vision of US exceptionalism. But he has previously criticised the international regimes for climate change and nuclear non-proliferation. A vital – perhaps the most vital – challenge for Guterres will therefore be to stop an unravelling of the Paris Agreement on climate change, in the light of weakening US support. Trump's election also increases the need, and the opportunity, for a Guterres-led UN to demonstrate that it is able to mobilise new non-state financial flows to solve global problems.

**10. Vision, communication and firmness.** Boutros-Ghali often joked that “SG” stood for “scape goat”. Guterres must set,

communicate and gain support for realistic expectations of what the UN system can and cannot do. With his wealth of humanitarian experience, Guterres is likely to focus on developing a culture of conflict prevention and economic, social and environmental resilience, placing the protection and empowerment of human beings at the heart of his UN vision. He must – with tact, humility and tenacity – alternately inspire, encourage, scold and embarrass states into living up to their international commitments.

António Guterres has assumed the role of Secretary-General at a time of great flux in world affairs, and he needs our wholehearted support. The United Nations is a unique, precious and potentially fragile experiment in humankind's recent history. Its continued survival – and I hope flourishing – relies in no small part on our continued public advocacy for strong, credible and effective international institutions and for a fairer, sustainable and more peaceful world. //

#### SAM DAWS //

Sam Daws is a UN expert at Oxford University and previously served as First Officer to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

# TEN YEARS OF BAN KI-MOON

Barbara Crossette

Ban Ki-moon became the eighth UN Secretary-General (SG) in January 2007, when the world was a much quieter place than it would soon become. Unforeseen ahead were the Great Recession; protests across the Arab world followed by deadly government backlashes; the emergence of ISIL as a global threat; and the explosion of refugees and migrants in the largest numbers since World War II, adding fuel to the rise of ultraconservative, xenophobic politics.

When you speak to people who have worked with Ban – or observed him closely – during his 10-year tenure, their first words are almost always positive. He is, they say, an honest, hardworking, gentlemanly international civil servant who has met his most important goals, in particular on climate change. But probe further and he is also described as a secretive man, who came to office surrounded by a protective entourage and was never able to reach the popularity of his predecessor.

As Ban approaches the end of his term in December 2016, he looked back in an interview with me for *The Nation* and reviewed what he had managed to do in these tumultuous years, regretting that there were “fires burning still” beyond the UN’s control. But he also showed flashes of anger in describing the procedural obstacles and pointless blocking techniques that stood in his way in both the Security Council and General Assembly. He acknowledged the frequent criticisms directed at him and the organisation by critics who get little news about the UN and then say: Mr Ban is not visible. “I learned a lot”, he said.

In his decade in office, Ban, a 72-year-old former foreign minister of South Korea, has not managed to overcome his aloof image and the annoyance caused by the often uncommunicative style of his tight circle of aides. This has opened the door to negative media coverage and to PR-savvy civil society advocates who have exposed the UN’s reluctance to engage with, or react quickly to, numerous crises, such as sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers and the introduction of cholera to Haiti by troops belonging to the UN mission.

Though Ban may not have been personally responsible for these failures, he symbolises the UN in the eyes of critics. Yet he has been a quiet force behind significant policy changes, among them issues opposed by powerful conservative states. And he has presided over the most ambitious global anti-poverty agenda in UN history, the Sustainable Development Goals, which were driven by national priorities, not handed down peremptorily from the UN hierarchy.

From the start of his tenure, Ban sought to make an international pact on addressing climate change a signature legacy. That came together last December in Paris. Almost. “The agreement in Paris last year was quite encouraging – the solidarity shown by the world community. But it has a long way to go”, he said.

On social issues, he has made emergency contraception universally available in UN operations for women raped in conflict areas and other crises. Defying opposition in the General Assembly, he approved benefits to spouses of UN staff in single-sex marriages. He has publicly supported LGBT rights internationally.

Some of his biggest internal challenges have been in management reform. “There are many issues for which I’ve been fighting to make this complex organisation into a modern one – more efficient, more accountable, and more transparent”, he said, listing the strengthening of the UN ethics office and the introduction of required annual reports from senior officials on priorities and performance. But, he said, comparing the UN to a corporation: “Here in the United Nations, we have 193 board members ... The problem is that each and every board member seems to believe that they are the chairman.”

As an example, he mentions his “mobility system” – a plan to move UN staff around from place to place or job to job to prevent the kind of sinecures the organisation is known for. “You know how long it took me until I got this mobility proposal adopted? Seven years! It takes only one or two voices to do this kind of damage”, he said, adding that the frequent demands for unanimity, a zero-sum game in the 193-member General Assembly, has meant that “even a single country can block very good decisions and ideas”.

Outsiders who study the UN say that Ban’s record on management is mixed. On the positive side they cite the new practice of releasing (voluntarily) financial disclosure and declaration of interests statements. In numerous appointments, however, he is said to have accommodated the demands of regions and governments though their nominees were not always the best candidates.

Sam Daws of Oxford University is among a majority of UN experts who



// "A perfect world may be on the far horizon. But a route to a better world, a safer world, a more just world, is in each and every one of us"  
Ban Ki-moon speaking to UNA-UK audience in London in June 2008  
© UNA-UK/Marcus Dawes. Quote taken from his address to the UN General Assembly on 20 September 2016



believe that Ban did not give enough priority to communications, including in his appointments. "The Secretary-General needs to articulate well what the UN is doing, and why it matters, to a global audience. If an SG is a good manager of people then he or she can use this to compensate for any weaknesses – e.g. in communications – by appointing [other senior officials] who can perform well with the media."

Ban is not the first UN chief to keep a low profile. Dag Hammarskjöld, considered by many to have been the best postholder, had a shy, quiet demeanour. But Ban had the misfortune to follow Kofi Annan, who became somewhat of a celebrity in New York. Helmut Volger, author of *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the United Nations*, has written that while "Ban's balance sheet is as good as that of most of his predecessors, he lacked the charisma of a great Secretary-General needed in these days".

Others, including Kishore Mahbubani, an influential former ambassador of Singapore to the UN, point to Western bias, suggesting that the Asian political culture and formal social interaction style that Ban brought with him to New York was neither understood nor appreciated. "He had the courage to speak out strongly for a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, when everyone else dodged the issue. He was also forceful on climate change. That helped the Paris conference to succeed."

Dan Plesch, a UN scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, believes that Ban was criticised for "not conforming to Western desires for film star charisma" and that he has "worked

tirelessly under the political pressures of the [Security Council's five permanent members] that can crush almost any initiative".

During the interview, Ban, who as a boy suffered with his family through the Korean War, described his distress at recurrent inaction in the Security Council. "When North Korea has launched a missile, the Security Council in several instances has not been able to do anything, even [issue] a press statement", he said, referring to the lowest level of expression to emerge from Council meetings. "I have been raising this issue with member states: if you continue like this your authority will be challenged."

His supporters have pointed to his quiet diplomacy. In 2008, for example, he talked his way into Myanmar, then under repressive military rule and closed to the outside world, to demand the right of the UN to send in relief supplies, which had been blocked by the generals after a devastating cyclone.

In his second term, Ban began to make more pointed public statements. In January 2016, he wrote an opinion article in *The New York Times* calling Israeli policies in Palestinian lands "shortsighted or morally damaging", which drew vitriolic criticism from Israeli leaders. In June 2016, he surprised everybody by saying publicly that Saudi Arabia had been scratched from a list of countries whose military kills and maims children – documented in many reports from Yemen – because the Saudis had threatened to withhold financial support for several UN operations.

He used his speech at the opening of his last General Assembly session to lash out at the Assad regime and its supporters, saying: "Many groups have killed many innocents, but none more so than the Government of Syria ... Powerful patrons that keep feeding the war machine also have blood on their hands."

Each new UN chief brings with him (they have all been men so far) a distinct personal, political, cultural, economic and operational background. It is perhaps no surprise that António Guterres, with his open and engaging personality – and experience as UN High Commissioner for Refugees – emerged as the favourite to succeed Ban, with unanimous backing from the Security Council and General Assembly. He too will face pressure to deliver behind the scenes, from the bully pulpit and in front of the camera. And like his predecessor, he will have no powers to compel states to act differently. Ban had a congenial partner in President Barack Obama and was not treated as a convenient scapegoat by Washington, as several of his predecessors had been. Guterres is not likely to have such an easy ride. It is not called the world's most impossible job for nothing. //

#### BARBARA CROSSETTE //

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A previous version of this article was published in *The Nation* on 20 September

# 10

## reasons why 2016 wasn't all bad

The crises in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere have led to a 20-year high in battlefield deaths and the largest number of people forced to flee their homes since records began. Add to this a string of extremist attacks, natural disasters, the Zika virus and an upsurge in xenophobia and insularity in the US and EU, and it's hard to be cheerful. And that's before reading reports that 2016 was the hottest year on record, and that we've probably already passed the threshold for avoiding a 1.5°C rise in global temperature.

But gloom must not give way to apathy. The UN continues to make progress on many fronts and it needs support, not hand-wringing. To keep you motivated, here are 10 good things that happened in 2016.

- 1. Paris Agreement**  
The historic Paris Agreement on climate change entered into force on 4 November, less than a year after its adoption. At the time of writing, 117 states representing nearly 80% of global emissions had ratified the Agreement, which sees all countries agree – for the first time – to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change. While US President-elect Donald Trump was reportedly seeking to withdraw from the Agreement, other states, including China, have reaffirmed their support.
- 2. Peace in Colombia**  
In June, a ceasefire agreed by Colombia's Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) ended the longest-running armed insurgency in the Western hemisphere: 52 years of fighting which saw some 260,000 people killed and millions displaced. Although the subsequent peace deal was narrowly rejected in a plebiscite, a new agreement was reached in November, which puts more emphasis on accountability and reparations. A UN mission will continue to monitor the ceasefire.
- 3. First UN LGBT rights expert**  
The Human Rights Council appointed Vitit Muntarbhorn, a law professor from Thailand, to serve as the first UN Independent Expert on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Proposed by a number of Latin American countries, the new role was established despite considerable opposition from Russia, Saudi Arabia and others. Muntarbhorn began work in November after a push by several African states to block him failed.
- 4. Cultural heritage conviction**  
The International Criminal Court sentenced Malian extremist Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi to nine years this September for directing attacks against monuments in Timbuktu. The case marked the Court's first prosecution of cultural destruction as a war crime. Concerns are mounting for numerous sites in the Middle East and North Africa, such as the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria, a UNESCO World Heritage site where ISIL has already destroyed temples.
- 5. UN action on sexual abuse by peacekeepers**  
The Secretary-General appointed Jane Holl Lute in February to serve as Special Coordinator on improving the UN's response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers. The following month, the Security Council endorsed his decision to repatriate units when there is credible evidence of SEA and to replace units if their home country has not taken appropriate steps. The UN has limited scope for action as troops remain under the jurisdiction of their own states.
- 6. States resolve to tackle anti-microbial resistance**  
At the General Assembly this September, world leaders agreed to address the root causes of anti-microbial resistance, which is now one of the biggest threats to global health according to the World Health Organization. Improper use of antibiotics, along with unfounded fears over vaccine safety – in places from Boko Haram-controlled parts of Nigeria to wealthy suburbs in California – have contributed to the alarming increase in drug-resistant bacteria.
- 7. Solar-power supergrid switched on**  
The first section of the Ouarzazate Solar Power Station in Morocco was switched on in February. Due to be completed in 2018, the station is set to be the world's largest, generating 580 megawatts. The project is intended to serve 1.1 million people, with energy to be exported to other parts of the region and Europe. The Climate Action Tracker rates Morocco as "doing its fair share" under the Paris deal.
- 8. Refugees take part in Rio Games**  
This year's Olympic and Paralympic Games saw teams of refugees compete for the first time: five runners from South Sudan, three Syrian-born swimmers, two judokas from the DRC, an Iranian discus thrower and an Ethiopian marathoner. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees described their participation as "a tribute to the courage ... of all refugees in overcoming adversity and building a better future for themselves and their families".
- 9. Largest marine protected area declared**  
Ross Sea in Antarctica will become the world's biggest marine protected area following agreement by 24 states – including Russia and the US – in October. It is considered to be the most pristine marine ecosystem, home to some 38% of the world's Adélie penguins, as well as huge numbers of krill – a crucial food for several animals. Environmentalists hope this development will support UN efforts to create a marine biodiversity treaty.
- 10. The appointment of António Guterres**  
For many states, UN staff and NGOs, the appointment of António Guterres as UN Secretary-General was one thing that went spectacularly right in 2016. An experienced UN practitioner and diplomat, he was selected following the most transparent process in UN history, which is considered to have played an important part in his appointment. UNA-UK is one of the co-founders of the *1 for 7 Billion* campaign that contributed to this historic UN reform.

# THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE



*With populism on the rise and security challenges deepening, voices from the left and the right are increasingly questioning the value of democracy. Democracy needs work, but it must be defended*

2016 has been variously described as the year that ‘the people’ made their voices heard, and the year that the people simply got it wrong.

While the context for each was very different, the referenda in the UK and Hungary, the rise of demagogues in countries such as France and the Philippines, and the US presidential election all appear to share common themes: anxiety over shifting global power and social norms, dissatisfaction with economic and political systems, and a deep-seated distrust of institutions and leaders. This mix of factors has

enabled politicians – and media outlets – to claim to represent an unspecified ‘us’ that invariably needs to thwart an unspecified ‘them’ (insert elites, experts, foreigners, minorities or any other group you wish) in order to take back control in some unspecified way.

This is hardly a new phenomenon. Many commentators have drawn parallels between the populist movements in the 1920s and 1930s and what is happening today. There has – rightly – been much focus on xenophobia and intolerance, and the need to defend human rights and the rule of law.



// Pro-democracy protesters mark the first anniversary of the ‘umbrella revolution’ outside the Hong Kong Government Complex, 28 September 2015.  
© Anthony Kwan/Getty Images

But the backlash against democracy is equally worrying. Some of it has come from expected quarters. Chinese state media, for example, has argued that Trump’s election campaign exposed the inherent risks of democracy. Russia, meanwhile, has been accused of seeking to influence the process through hacks and leaks. The President-elect himself repeatedly questioned the US electoral process, in addition to threatening to lock up his opponent.

Even more troubling, perhaps, is the comparatively muted response by those who should be democracy’s most ardent



defenders. It has become fashionable to question the value of democracy and whether people are capable of making informed decisions. And leaders from the left and right alike have spoken out in favour of stability over human rights. The EU's deal with Turkey over refugees is one example. A Trump–Putin agreement to address terrorism (but nothing else) in Syria could be another.

UNA-UK believes that more effort must be made to support a well-rounded approach to democracy that moves beyond the ballot box to enabling people to feel they have a meaningful say in

decisions that affect their lives. The UN has identified the following as essential elements of democracy, in addition to free and fair elections: respect for human rights; full participation of women, young people, minorities and vulnerable groups; the rule of law and independent institutions; free and pluralistic media and civil society groups; and good quality, accessible education.

Freedom House, which bases its annual *Freedom in the World* report on indicators derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, concluded that in 2016 crises “fuelled xenophobic sentiment in

democratic countries, undermined the economies of states dependent on the sale of natural resources, and led authoritarian regimes to crack down harder on dissent”. It noted that these trends had culminated in the tenth consecutive year of decline in global freedom.

But in the report, Freedom House also pointed to several examples where elections offered a peaceful way out of failed policies, notably in Nigeria, Venezuela and Myanmar, concluding that “democratic systems may ultimately prove more resilient than their brittle authoritarian counterparts”. //

# GLOBAL BRITAIN

**Matthew Rycroft**

It is now 18 months since I became the British Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations. It has been an eventful time – conflict with Russia over Syria and Ukraine, ongoing fighting in Yemen and Libya (two of the countries the UK ‘holds the pen on’ in the Security Council), a ceasefire in one of the longest running conflicts in the world (Colombia), and landmark global agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change.

But amongst all that activity, I have found myself preoccupied by two other events in recent months: first, the UK’s decision in June to leave the European Union, and second, the selection of António Guterres as the new UN Secretary-General.

Both were unique, monumental events. Both evoked strong opinions and intense debate. And while on the surface they had little in common, what they share is an opportunity and a requirement to change British multilateralism.

Let’s start with Brexit. Even as I watched the referendum results coming in, I knew I would face questions from journalists in the UN the next day. Will the UK remain a permanent member of the Security Council? Will Britain continue to invest in development? Can you still engage in hard-hitting diplomacy? These were all different versions of the same question: what will be the UK’s place in the world?

My answer today remains the same as it was then: at the top table.

If anything, the role the UK plays at the United Nations has gained even greater importance. As the UK does less through the EU, our work with and through the UN will be an even bigger part of the UK’s global outlook.

Some things will not change. Take our contributions to global

aid spending. UK aid has always set the standard. We were the first and remain the only G20 nation to reach the global 0.7 per cent target set by the UN. And this commitment is embedded in UK law. It’s not going anywhere.

The same applies to our approach to responding to the world’s greatest humanitarian crises. When there is a need, we step up. And not just in the hot spots that you’ve seen on the news. For example, Britain played a leading role in tackling Ebola, particularly in Sierra Leone. We committed a £427m package of direct support to help contain, control, treat and ultimately defeat that terrible disease. And we would do so again.

And we’ll still be there to help those facing the world’s most devastating conflicts and crises. In response to the horrific situation in Syria and the neighbouring region, the UK has committed more than £2.3bn for the period between 2012 and 2020. That’s our largest-ever humanitarian response and it’s helping the most vulnerable, when they need it most. So far, our funding has translated into: 21 million food rations; clean water to more than two million people; 4.4 million medical consultations; 5.8 million relief packages; and help with sanitation and hygiene for 8.9 million people.

So the United Kingdom will remain a global force for good. This begins with our work at the UN, but the evidence isn’t found in New York. It’s found in Lebanon, where classrooms are filled with refugees learning to read. It’s found in Haiti, where people who have lost everything find shelter under tarpaulins emblazoned with the UK Aid logo. And it will be seen on the faces of the 1.25 million children that will have their lives saved thanks to immunisations supported by the United Kingdom.

But for us to truly succeed in this effort, we can’t do it alone.



// Matthew Rycroft speaks to journalists on the appointment of the next UN Secretary-General  
© UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

All of the aforementioned statistics are in some way tied to the UN. Our funding for aid is only as good as the UN agencies on the ground that are helping to deliver it. So we need to be working hard to make sure the United Nations is fit for purpose.

And if you want a strong and effective United Nations, you'll need a strong and effective Secretary-General.

That's where António Guterres comes in. In a crowded field, he emerged as the strongest and most capable leader in the race. How do we know this? Simple. For the first time in history, there was an open, transparent recruitment process. There was a clear timeline for the appointment. And crucially, there were interactive hearings and televised debates, open to the whole of the UN, to civil society, and to the watching world.

It's sad to say, but this really is uncharted territory for the UN. In previous Secretary-General selections, the UN membership – let alone the world at large – didn't officially know who had applied. And those in the running were nearly always men. This year, over half of the applicants were women.

The *1 for 7 Billion* campaign – and within it UNA-UK – were instrumental in proposing improvements to the process. Among member states in New York, the UK was proud to be prominent in making them happen.

Last year, we helped author the letter that would invite candidates from around the world to apply openly – leading to the first public list of candidates in UN history.

This year, candidates were asked hundreds, if not thousands, of questions from governments and NGOs from around the world. I even put out a call to my Twitter followers encouraging them to tweet me their questions, which I then asked the

candidates. In all other years, the Security Council considered candidates in secret.

We certainly didn't do this alone. The UN Security Council displayed welcome unity, agreeing on Guterres as the recommended candidate. The Presidents of the General Assembly in 2015–16 and 2016–17 worked tirelessly to make sure we had the best process possible.

The measures instituted this year did not happen by accident and we didn't adopt them just so we could say the process was “transparent and open”. We fought for them because we had a vested interest in getting this right; in getting a strong Secretary-General to lead a strong United Nations.

The need is clear. There are more refugees on the planet than at any other time since the Second World War. We are seeing the length of conflicts measured in decades, not years. When the Secretary-General takes his seat in his office across the street from where I write this, he will be met with a to-do list that includes ending global poverty, bringing peace to Syria, and promoting human rights.

With so much on the line, the second-best person for the job simply would not suffice. But when António Guterres takes office on 1 January next year, he will not have to face these challenges alone. He can be assured that we, the United Kingdom, will be standing ready to do our part too – just as we always have, and just as we always will. //

**MATTHEW RYCROFT //**

Matthew Rycroft CBE is the UK's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York

# BRITISH VALUES?

In the last issue of this magazine, I raised my concerns about a creeping mood of nationalism and isolationism in the UK and beyond. It now feels like less of a creep, more of a lurch – the consequences of the UK’s departure from the European Union are beginning to sink in, the US elected a president who has declared that America “get[s] nothing out of the United Nations” and far-right parties look set to do well in a number of European elections next year. There can be no doubt that people across the developed world are feeling increasingly disconnected from the post-war institutions that have protected all of us for so long.

I also shared with you UNA-UK’s *Stand For* campaign. This project engages people by simply asking them: what value do you stand for? People across the country gave responses such as “fairness”, “equality”, “happiness” and “human rights”. Over 2,100 of them joined our movement through this campaign and we reached thousands more on social media.

As a starting point, this worked well; it’s an accessible and personal way of talking about international cooperation and global issues that many find distant and abstract. But we want to take this conversation further. If you and I have values that we use to inform our relationships with others, shouldn’t we expect the same of our country on the world stage?

Last month, I commissioned the pollster ComRes to take our questions on values to a much bigger audience. They asked a representative cross-section of the British public how their own behaviour compares with how they want their government to act.

The questions in the poll present decisions from everyday life (for example, would you tell a friend that they were doing something wrong? Would you look after a stranger?) alongside decisions that the UK Government needs to make on a daily basis (should it call out our allies on human rights abuses? Should it spend our foreign aid budget at home?). You can see the results at [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk).

We’re going to use these results to take our message beyond our usual networks by releasing them, and accompanying commentary, to the national media. We’ll also work with local UNAs to get analysis of regional breakdowns into local media.

This research will be a useful benchmark to ascertain what people want from their government when it comes to the UK’s relationships with other countries. We’ll use it to add weight to

our other campaigns, underlining that the British public is fundamentally outward-looking and generous.

The exercise was a bit of a gamble. We didn’t know whether it would find a disconnect between individual ethics and how we want our leaders to behave. And there is indeed a mismatch. For example, while the majority of Britons believe the UK should speak out when an ally commits human rights abuses, in the same way they would tell a friend that they were doing something wrong, the personal traits of generosity and abiding by the law don’t appear to translate to UK aid or adherence to international treaties. Clearly, we need to do a much better job of explaining these commitments.

Would you like to get involved? There are three ways that UNA-UK members and supporters can help.

First, you can strengthen our local voice. There are over 100 officially recognised local UNAs in communities and universities across the UK, engaging local people with our national message. If you have one nearby, you can get in touch with them via [www.una.org.uk/localUNAs](http://www.una.org.uk/localUNAs). If you don’t, then how about setting up your own group? It’s easy to do (see [www.una.org.uk/local](http://www.una.org.uk/local)) and you’ll be joining a nationwide network of activists. And if you’re already part of a group, we’ll soon be helping you generate publicity by getting the results of our poll into your local media.

Second, sign up for refresher training and get equipped to be a local activist. UNA-UK’s Conference 2017 will take place on 20 May. The organising committee – elected by UNA-UK members – has developed the format of this event to allow participants to explore one of UNA-UK’s campaigns in more depth and to work with us on local activities and resources. You will also be able to pitch your ideas to participants and find out more about the work of UNA-UK.

Finally, can you support us financially? We get no core funding from government, no financial support from the UN and we have no corporate sponsors. We are deeply grateful for the continued financial support from our members and readers – we rely on you to help us give a voice to people who believe that the UN is needed now more than ever. //

**RICHARD NELMES //**

Richard Nelmes is UNA-UK Deputy Director (Outreach)



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# OPEN MINDED, OPEN HEARTED

**M**y family has always had an interest in learning about other cultures and meeting people from around the world. For many years, we hosted foreign students while they spent a year studying in the local high school. We had always said that we couldn't afford to take our children round the world, so instead we brought the world to them!

Once our children left home we changed from hosting high school students to hosting university students through the HOST scheme. HOST is a charity which promotes international friendship and cultural exchange by arranging for adult international students to spend a day, weekend, or a few days at Christmas in the homes of volunteers across the UK. We have loved meeting students from all over the world, of all ages and all types of personality. Many have kept in touch, some have made return visits, and we hope to continue hosting, learning and making new friends for many years to come.

In July 2015, my husband and I moved to a small village in the north of Northumberland. Having been so heavily involved with international people for many years, it was rather sad for us to see the negative attitude of a number of the residents towards people who aren't from the UK. It was a feeling that intensified in June 2016, when the EU referendum took place.

I was a polling clerk at the village polling station on the day and approximately 60 per cent of the village's voters told us

how much they resented "all the immigrants" living in the UK and "taking our jobs"; how overcrowded we are – ironic in a village with little over 300 residents; how "they" make no attempt to integrate. There are two Polish families living locally and their lifestyles were criticised, despite them being hard-working, family-orientated, polite and cheerful people. I was greatly saddened that they were being used as a verbal punching bag, not through any fault of their own, but simply because certain groups prefer to regurgitate negative and discriminatory rhetoric rather than getting to know one another.

On the day after the referendum, one of the main complainants greeted me with: "Well, we won!" When I pointed out that this was a matter of opinion, I was treated to a volley of abuse. It was like watching a 60-something throw a temper tantrum more appropriate for a six-year old and would have been laughable had it not been for the sheer nastiness of his language. He concluded with "now they can all be sent back home"; an ignorant phrase which has been bandied about by many similar "Little Englanders".

Later in the day I bumped into the two Polish families, both of whom greeted me warily. By this time, reports had already been broadcast of xenophobic attacks around the country and I felt it necessary to apologise and emphasise that not everyone felt or behaved like that. Whatever the overall opinion of EU membership was, everyone is still human and deserves

to be treated with friendliness, kindness, and respect.

I decided that day that I would definitely continue to host. It was now more important than ever to extend a hand of friendship to overseas people, and I was determined that the ignorant, xenophobic, and abusive people in the village would not win. It may only be a small gesture, but it can make a huge difference to individuals who may otherwise feel isolated and unwelcome. If we continue introducing more overseas students to the village, maybe some opinions here will change too.

My family and I will continue to be open minded and open hearted and will operate an open house policy for all. If you would also like to offer the hand of friendship to an occasional international student guest, I recommend contacting HOST on 020 7739 6292, or visiting their website, [www.hostuk.org](http://www.hostuk.org), for more information. Whatever your opinion of the EU, and whichever way you voted in the referendum, it is important that friendships continue to be built, and knowledge exchanged.

A side note: the villager concerned in the abusive tirade is himself a migrant to the village, having moved there from Lancashire. I think the irony is lost on him! //

#### ANNE HOPKINSON //

Anne Hopkinson is a recently retired primary school teacher. She has been sharing her home and family with students through HOST since 2007



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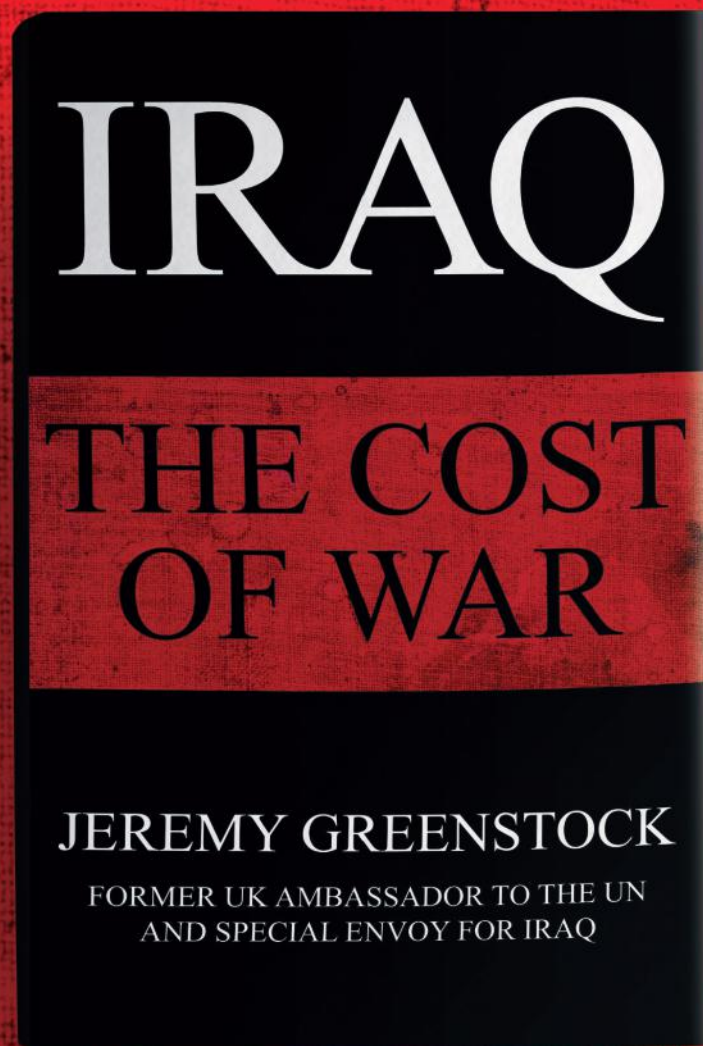


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