

International Brick Wall: Encompasses the United Nations Architecture Throughout War Fares: A Perspective

Sabrina Z. Cui (author)¹

¹CCIR: Cambridge Centre of International Research, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

The international frameworks and academic studies alongside theories relating to the United Nations—from now on will be referred back to the acronym “UN” throughout this paper—architecture during warfare, both in terms of physical architecture and organizational structure, such as the UN’s ‘Peace Building’. Reflected to explore the long criticism from before, after, and during conflict, raising the question “How does the UN build their brick-by-brick foundation action plans regarding warfare?” alongside, “Is it as effective as they say?” Methodology and opportunities for the UN’s actions will be discussed to explore further variations or recommendations to conduct a better future in the physical or logical tangible system of warfare response. From the drafts, councils, and preparation, it constantly shows three major factors affecting their rate of success: money, local realities, and finally, the social dimensions before, during, and after conflict. Finding repeated actions, unsustainable and bad-timed promises, was presented. Drawing on past successful peace-building

architecture international cases, it showcases different types of significance to humanity, alongside how they succeeded.

Keywords: architecture, international-law, civil-crisis

Introduction

Brick by brick, you can build a house, school, facility, or even a headquarters. Each brick in the UN is a law safeguarding civilians, tradition, and the fabric of humanity. With a nuclear bomb yielding 50 megatons being dropped (Wellerstein, 2021), how does a mere law protect a singular building while creating a legacy or, further, a non-stop, unchanged tie bound by the law? The UN is a platform that brings together and formally states its intentions, policies, and overall impact in a documented fashion, creating a forum. Additionally, it was constructed after World War II to prevent future global conflicts while promoting international cooperation. It does not create nor preserve the 'peace,' as there have been long inhumane acts since humans have walked the earth; no amount of science is needed to prove this statement, considering cases of rape, homicide, or any other violent acts against humanity have been written in history books. It has been stronger, ongoing, and more brutal in the past, as evidenced by historical records. Aside from the USMC, the UN cannot stop it other than by bringing awareness and impact after the damage. However, has the enforcement been successful? From the efforts influencing the organization, for example, the international architecture law frameworks, adapting to new forms of conflict, long-term investment, sustainable architecture development, and the mobilization for post-war industries. From the context of the UN, it is not merely about buildings and the law. It creates a powerful form of communication that embodies the international law's organizational and

administrative spaces, yet creates aesthetically pleasing facilities in the UN. Questions that bring the two topics together ultimately are: how do the two relate? How does one protect another? Why should this be a factor that needs more focus on throughout its journey?

From the UN's obligation to help and adapt to build safe spaces from an architectural standpoint, do their current frameworks impact or influence the true timeline as of today? Aside from the UN's physical architecture projects, such as the Headquarters in New York City, USA, thinking of architecture as more of a structure for an organization, an example is the UN Peace-building Architecture. (GPPAC, May 2020.) From this, there is often a common misconception regarding the two. In this paper, both terminologies will be used throughout the process. Connecting physical infrastructure to its social aspects, it is nevertheless important and beyond a necessary humanitarian need, from houses to health care centres to refugee centres, alongside the thousands more humanitarian departments; it is important to note that not having one, especially during a conflict, is one of the hardest times to adapt while being neglected, leading to conditions beyond repair. Creating a life-changing movement for those who were just trying to live under the same sky as us.

Results of Repeated Actions, Efforts to Sustain the Future

Is it possible to sustain the peace and harmony of infrastructure from just frameworks? Frameworks, crises, and conflict are all key components as to why the UN was formed in the first place. On November 25, 2024, due to the surge of conflicts, emerging communications tools created disinformation and misinformation, holding a different reality. Conflicts became increasingly multilayered and more deadly, with a sudden increase in the amount of violence due to geopolitical polarization and growing militarization, ultimately

creating the UN Peace-building Architecture. (GPPAC, May 2020) With human rights highlighted—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social—they are at the heart of prevention, peace-building, and sustaining peace. The UN's approach to the surge of conflict was to build on these frameworks to address the gap of poor systematic support towards affected countries/populations while preventing the recurrence of conflict. Establishing it as international support moving beyond peacekeeping to encompass development, reconciliation, and institution-building; fostering long-term stability with recovery in post-conflict nations. (Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2020) They incorporated often neglected factors such as women and the youth, who were mainly targets due to systemic barriers, threats, and violence (in addition to sexual violence). They have also highlighted many factors conflict has created or worsened: climate change, increasing challenges for affected populations or regions, forced displacement being a consequence of failure to uphold peace and security, alongside the unsustainable debt affecting developing countries.

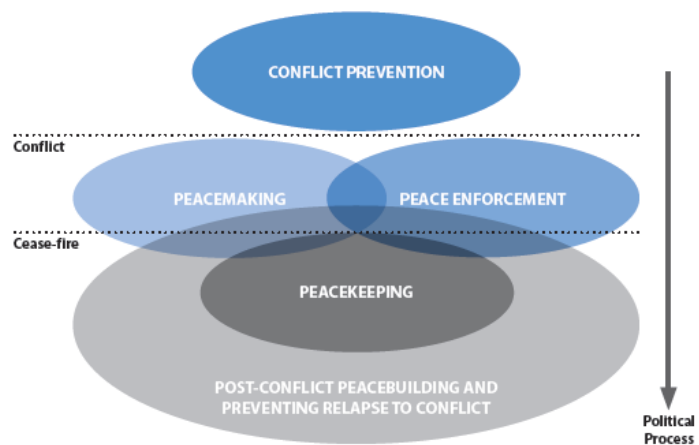
Addressing these root causes is often a double-edged sword, going forward or two steps back as a nation. To face these multifaceted challenges, a global order was placed: “The Adoption of the Pact for the Future in September 2024.” (United Nations, 2024) This indicates that prevention is a priority for all states only when the prospects of a crisis are too evident, shifting from an international focus to a national one. Building national capacities and infrastructure for peace, member states' priorities should be local, and strategies should be context-specific, adapting to the local realities plus dynamic focus, while building their own capacities. Additionally, a new fund—The Sustainable Development Goal—and foundation was founded, often a repeated action found in nearly half of the UN's sub-organizations. The Pact was a commitment, not a solution; however, they missed and lacked

so much foundation that critics such as Democracy Without Borders started to note the lack of actual efforts that The Pact needed. Noting it lacked credible mechanisms for monitoring progress and enforcing actions, ensuring the implementation. (Silva-Leander, 2024). The Pact also failed to formally include cities or other stakeholders in the core UN structures despite their growing role in global governance, missing an opportunity for inclusivity, a common goal of the UN.

Figure 1: Linkages and Grey Areas

(Source: UN, 2008:19)

Shown in figure 1, the 'success' has been framed as a framework for future action and not a completed implementation plan, the effectiveness was nevertheless lacking in multiple sectors: specific mechanisms, a



lack of leadership to drive implementation and progress, monitoring alongside evaluation, emphasizing support of democratic institutions, and civil liberties. Despite having funding from international financial institutions like the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), the monitoring and transparency of the financial states were unclear, showing a lack of commitment to us, the public audience.

Although the UN Peace-building Architecture had later amendments on May 2, 2024, it still lacked the civil aspect to bring the different perspectives into our reality crisis. It limited eminent people from relevant and non-relevant members, lacking consideration of

views, and leadership, from those in civil society. Many who speak for the UN as part of the civil society are often seen in a speech but never further in action. An example is Autumn Peltier, who was a regular guest speaker at the United Nations, speaking on the First Nations' perspective in Canada. Lack of clean water sources in Canada, specifically in reserves, although her speeches are impactful and strong, such as her speech on her disapproval of Justin Trudeau's choices supporting several pipeline projects affecting her communities' regions' clean water (Madson, 2020). Coming from her speech of 'civil society,' there have been no further actions that the UN or Canada has taken, regardless of the internal conflict happening in Canada. Apart from the false promises of Justin Trudeau, it is seen that the UN cannot do much, regardless of 'sustaining peace,' especially in this form of conflict (government to civil society). This can be from multiple limitations, including a lack of funding, unsustainable development, and infrastructure development. As human rights are a highlight in the UN Peace-building Architecture, it is important to include civil society as much as possible, aside from organizational roles. This can be from allowing them to integrate innovative ideas to solve these issues. As we know the next generation will always surpass in technology, including innovative technology. If the UN can include more of these bright minds in its workspace, it will increase the inclusivity and job opportunities for the youth, especially those who were in affected conflict areas. Alongside perspective analysis/views, they will be able to raise the UN towards a brighter, sustainable figurative brick wall for the UN's infrastructure.

Infrastructure being critical is often neglected like a country's "rotting foundation," allowing the public to see the contribution of architects and the civil society can explore the potential social contributions of both sustaining peace-building in post-conflict reconstruction

settings and the future. The academic paper “The Contribution of Architects to Post-Conflict” argues that architects possess unique skills that can significantly contribute to rebuilding communities beyond mere technical construction. Based on Jean-Paul Lederach’s conflict transformation theory, the document argues that architecture can contribute to peace by improving relationships between different leadership levels and local communities in reconstruction processes and by providing psychosocial healing through rebuilding. The skills and capabilities an architect can provide to an affected area can provide a stronger sense of community, growth, and development. The context analysis of an architect allows the ability to understand local physical (pre-, during-, and post-conflict), social (psychological feelings), economic (job opportunities, economic boost), and cultural environments (Lepere, 2020). Community involvement includes training in participatory design processes, promoting social cohesion plus local empowerment, showing multidisciplinary collaboration of experience working in cross-functional teams, while linking users, clients, municipalities, and technical consultants. Followed by the psychosocial understanding of time-related psychological mechanisms, it recognizes the emotional alongside the cultural value of a built environment, discussing architecture’s psychosocial dimensions. Architects have this overlooked potential that the humanitarian community often disregards broader social contributions, as architects are typically viewed only for technical construction skills. (Lepere, 2020, pp. 10-11) There is a mutual misunderstanding between humanitarian workers, architects, and civil society. Their contributions can lead to multidimensional solution to peace-building: economic revitalization, social or political reconciliation, psychological healing, community rebuilding, and restoring hope. The critical skills of architects benefit more than the government alone; they can better benefit the UN

internationally by analyzing the local contexts, involving affected communities in design processes, working in multidisciplinary teams, understanding the psychosocial aspects of reconstruction, while bridging the technical and social dimensions of rebuilding. In the document the author discusses 3 post-conflict case studies: 1. Rwanda: Butaro District Hospital Project, 2. Colombia: Medellin Urban Regeneration, and 3. Iraq: Durable Return Program. However, this paper's discussion will be on the following case studies: 1. Rwanda: Butaro District Hospital Project, 2. Japan: Home-for-All 3. Ukraine: Kryvyi Rih Community Housing

Rwanda: Butaro District Hospital Project

A non-profit by the MASS Design Group—acronym signifies 'Model of Architecture Serving Society'— to research, build, and advocate for architecture that promotes justice and human dignity" (MASS Design Group, 2011). The hallways of the hospital are in the outdoors, making rooms have big openable windows to mitigate transmission of airborne diseases, thanks to the natural ventilation system nature provides. It brings natural light and splendid views for both the healthcare workers and patients, emotionally and psychologically, allowing the mind to heal. The project itself was cost-effective as they used local material, such as the local volcanic rocks for the building's walls, providing an ecological responsibility and reducing the embodied carbon. Construction costs were invested into the local economy, providing labour-intensive practice of carving and assembling stones, providing jobs with a sense of pride to contribute to a project for a common good. This showed the architects were immersed in context while understanding the nation's challenges and its opportunities.

Japan: Home-forAll

The Home-for-All initiative was developed after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, providing small communal buildings to survivors in temporary housing settlements. Architects, including Toyo Ito, Kazuyo Sejima, and Riken Yamamoto, led the project, engaging locals. Using its locally available timber and regional construction methods, to quickly build the supportive gathering spaces. It employed local wood in simple forms, keeping embodied carbon low while respecting the environment, allowing the architecture to be sustainable and cost-effective. The pavilions fostered everyday rituals—sharing meals, play, and conversation—restoring dignity and hope amid loss and trauma. This simple social healing involved residents directly, allowing a post-conflict reconciliation. (ArchEyes, 2021)

Ukraine: Kryvyi Rih Community Housing

In post-war Ukraine, architects and local communities have transformed damaged municipal buildings into community housing using locally sourced and recycled materials, such as timber, brick, and stone. The model resulted in a response of displacement and social trauma following recent conflicts. The sustainability was adaptive reuse of minimized waste, reduced costs, and highlighted the efficient use of existing resources to support the environmental goals even in crisis. The project not only provides shelter but also social services, counselling, and shared recreation, nurturing psychological recovery plus social revival. The community-led design and rehabilitation of familiar, damaged buildings helped displaced people to reclaim their urban roots while rebuilding trust, redeveloping social networks with a sense of belonging and resilience. (Rih, 2025)

From these tangible episodes, the UN could incorporate a thing or two from the connections and reality that these projects have brought. Bringing a more realistic perspective and play within their works. The UN lacks a strong understanding of the local realities and sustainable resolutions that can be avoided for future conflict recurrence. Many projects, such as refugee camps or even schools, are often destroyed a decade or so later. Providing current funding for backup infrastructure, such as bomb-proof buildings, underground works, or seismic isolation systems from Japan to resist earthquakes. Ultimately improves the likelihood of these projects sustaining longer and protecting civilians for a longer period of time. The current rebuilding projects often include modern technology such as cement, steel, wood, and bulldozers, causing costly materials, rising CO2 emissions, alongside many other sorts of pollution: air, water, land, and deterioration, regardless of whether they have a framework in place. An example being “Zero Carbon Buildings for All,” (Stewart et al., 2019) which is a plan to decarbonize buildings by 2030 for new buildings and 2050 for existing ones. The green building investments are neither timely nor transparent. Is there a specific technology that will create more damage than good from this project? In an outside conflict perspective, droughts are often a common issue occurring prominently in vulnerable regions such as Africa, Australia, India, parts of the Amazon basin, and the Mediterranean. Sustainable, green infrastructure is yet to be implemented, causing an internal conflict between both the affected population and nature. Implementing or researching further on this topic can be beneficial to the economy, social healing, plus perseverance, together with sustainable access to water sources and common infrastructure access.

From tracing complex evolution from the 19th century to the present day, the evolution of systems to sustain the balance of peace, the law, and architecture is complex.

“The International Peace Architecture” is a multifaceted, layered system developed to address global conflicts, rights, and justice (Oliver P. Richmond). Through its six distinct stages, such as the Geopolitical Balance of Power (19th Century), it focused on the elite diplomatic interactions centred on managing conflicts between industrialized states and empires, focusing on the elite-led industrialization. Followed by the Westphalian Pluralist System, which emerged with the League of Nations, addressing nationalism and early decolonization, attempting to create a liberal democratic peace framework centred on sovereign states. Marxist Critique and Liberal Peace-building expanded rights frameworks, incorporated postcolonial together with hybrid international relations approaches, aimed to produce international equality and solidarity in an attempt to maintain the previous architectural layers. However, with support from the global capital, the rise of neoliberal state-building came, focusing on state security with digital dynamics (emerging states) characterized by securitization and stabilization approaches. It could have potentially diverged into two paths: expanding global civil society and rights, or digital governmentally constraining political claims.

Many of these architectural layers are lacking or missing within multiple resolutions and critical moments within the UN presents a lack of critical-historical methodology to understand international peace while highlighting the dynamic or non-linear evolution of

Figure 2: *Layers of Peace Architecture (Oliver P. Richmond, pp. 399, figure 1)*

Layers of Peace Architecture		International Peace Architecture	
Conflict Type			
Layer 6	Inequality, lack of justice, unsustainability (Stage: Twenty-first century digital peace/ digital governmentality)	Multilateral, multiscalar, transnational, networks of NGOs, transversal, multivertical movements, institutions, and International Conventions; mobility, expanded rights, and global justice	
Definition/ methodology:		[Peace with Global Justice/ Methodological Everydayism]	
Layer 5	Elite and global profit and resource extraction, fragile and collapsed states, plus risk of terrorism (Stage: Neoliberal statebuilding)	State security and the free flow of economic resources, global capital and the neoliberal state, plus the development of new technologies of power; basic rights and resilience; new technological advances	
Definition/ methodology:		[Neoliberal Peace/ Methodological Neoliberalism]	
Layer 4	Subaltern claims for equality, justice/ sustainability (Stage: Post-1960s Expanded rights claims)	Social democracy, multilateral institutions, international law and the expansion of international conventions, civil and global civil society, concepts like Human Security and sustainable development; human rights, participatory democracy, economic and social rights	
Definition/ methodology:		[Post-Liberal Peace: Hybrid/ Everyday Peace Methodological Everydayism]	

international systems. In figure 2, it reflects the ongoing tensions between elite power structures along with subaltern claims. Demonstrating the complex negotiation of rights, justice, and global order. Architecture is simultaneously emancipatory and hegemonic, drawing on the rhizomatic process: the networked expansion of subaltern political claims. Drawing on multiple philosophical traditions connecting architecture and peace, including law, showing that without these fundamental connections, it is impossible to think critically about the internal tensions and approaches to resolution. The International Peace Architecture is inherently unstable, containing the internal tensions between the emancipatory and hegemonic frameworks, accompanied by the social elites' approaches to peace. It is fragile, complex, and constantly negotiating between both frameworks; the potential is there for a further evolution of a more just and sustainable global order; however, it will be hard, as there is no solid focus behind it compared to the other evolutionary frameworks.

“When we make a building for the UN, ’noted Oscar Niemeyer in 1947, ‘do we need to rely on the UN?’” (McKenna, 2021, pp. 1) As we discussed the symbolic medium of international peace, in and out of the UN, what about international architecture? From a scholarly article by Miriam Bak McKenna, “Designing for International Law: The Architecture of International Organizations 1922-1952.” Exploring the architectural development of international organizations from 1922 to 1952—as stated in the article title—examining how architectural design reflects and shows international legal identity alongside its practices. It is often difficult to rely on the organization for the stability of rebuilding post-conflict; its many committees and causes are hard to balance out, regardless of the amount of effort or funding put into the works. If one committee is neglected, it is still an awareness creation from the organization, but not a solution. Buildings are not just functional spaces but represent the broader political and legal ideologies fostering community. Designs communicate the identity, values, and aspirations of international legal institutions, serving as a material manifestation of international legal discourse.

Historical Architecture Episodes

In the article, there are three main episodes to summarize its overall impact. 1. International Labour Organization (ILO) Building (1922-1926), 2. League of Nations Palace (1927-1937), 3. United Nations Headquarters. Representing different visions or designs to signal the shift of traditional and modern values, together with reflecting on tension, ambivalence, preservation, and geopolitical shifts. Some of the many theoretical contributions are the challenges within each process. Traditional views of international law can be seen as abstract and immaterial, shifting from state-centric to a collaborative model. Architectural design mirrored these philosophical changes, and the modernist “universal” style itself is culturally limited. From this, it creates a critical site of understanding evolution and deeply symbolizes the representations of political and legal ideologies. (McKenna, 2021)

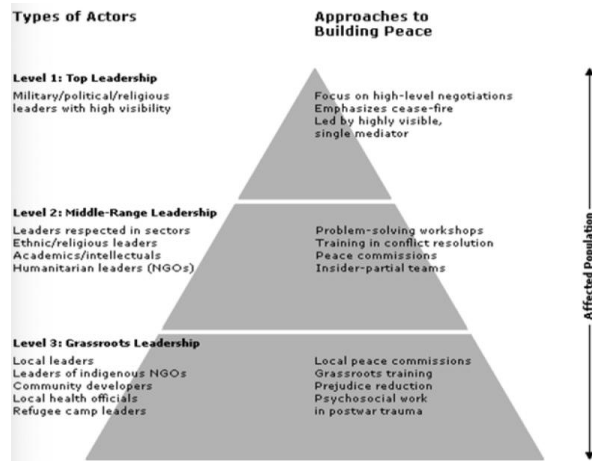
Processes of Building Peace from Architecture

Infrastructure and peace have one thing in common: both are fundamental systems and services that a country or organization relies on to function effectively. Say one of the factors is missing, such as funding, sustainability, or innovation. In that case, the entirety of its vital significance will rumble like the constant infrastructure alongside the trust and love of the civilians being destroyed in war. Although the UN has been working to identify elements that could make peace durable, nearly half of civil wars are prone to setbacks, with most peace processes relapsing into conflict. It is essential to recognize that peace, development, and human rights are interconnected, ultimately requiring comprehensive approaches to address the root causes of conflict alongside the importance of national ownership and inclusivity. The UN's approach to peace-building needs the core principles of peace. Critical elements of peace-building include: restoring public security, promoting political dialogue, extending state authority, protecting human rights, supporting economic recovery, promoting national reconciliation, national ownership, inclusivity, rule of law, effective leadership, coordination, and accountability. The priorities of recurring peace-building include: basic safety and security, support to political processes, provision of basic

services, restoring government functions, and economic revitalization. Principles can be politically loaded but often seen as risks of “box-ticking exercise” without transformative change; the funding, together with implementation challenges, persists. Creating a goal is not difficult. Preventing conflict outbreak and recurrence, yet achieving that goal, is the most challenging part. Most peace processes are prone to relapse; the Emerging Jus Post Bellum Framework (Gallen et al., 2014) can develop normative guidelines for post-conflict transitions, recognizing peace as an imperfect and ongoing process, while balancing justice, sustainability, and practical considerations. For emerging frameworks, a gradual development of the potential ‘law of peacemaking’ is a common goal, yet transparency to the public alongside feedback can strengthen future executions. The growing understanding of programmatic principles is just as important for accountability, inclusivity, and the human rights aspect. From the evolution of architecture in peace-building, ancient agora to post-war reconstruction efforts like Warsaw’s Old Town and Dresden’s Frauenkirche emphasize the architect’s social responsibility beyond functional design, creating environments for healing and inclusion. Architecture is presented as a tool for sustainability and resilience, integrating green technologies and adaptive designs (e.g, Makoko Floating School) and memorials and museums (e.g, Vietnam Veterans Memorial). These powerful tools preserve history while honouring victims, a sense of innovative, climate-responsive design meeting community needs, while promoting environmental sustainability. Challenges within the peace-oriented architecture include political instability, resource constraints, and cultural/political divisions. However, the role of architects in humanitarian efforts is explored with examples such as Lebbeus Woods’ work in Sarajevo and Lederach’s (1997) (Jamil et al., 2025) conflict transformation theory used as a theoretical construct, positioning architects at the middle-range level to facilitate dialogue. The multifaceted challenges and opportunities in using architecture as a tool for post-conflict recovery and peace-building.

Key obstacles include resource constraints, where limited funding and material availability restrict a project scope, as well as cultural and political divisions, often rooted in

Figure 3: *John Paul Lederach's Peace-building Pyramid*



historical grievances that hinder collective reconciliation. Bureaucratic barriers add further delays through complex regulations, while minimal stakeholder engagement restricts the integration of community voices, leading to designs that

may overlook cultural and social needs. At the same time, architecture presents transformative opportunities through sustainability, such as incorporating eco-friendly materials and green spaces that both address environmental concerns while promoting peace and educational opportunities. Prime examples of this is memorials and cultural centres, as they can serve as vital platforms for intergenerational learning about reconciliation; and collaborative approaches, where partnerships among architects, policymakers, and local communities can maximize impact. The research underscores the significance of inclusive design, cultural restoration, sustainable urban planning in building unity and resilience, while removing bureaucratic obstacles to strengthen outcomes. Learning outcomes stress cultural sensitivity, community participation, environmental responsibility, and collective action. Ultimately, the conclusion reaffirms architecture's powerful role in rebuilding divided societies—constructing spaces of remembrance, serenity, and learning—fostering ownership

through participatory processes; and acting as both a practical and symbolic medium for healing, reconciliation, and sustainable peace.

Conclusion

Within this paper, the topics discussed all the different current and past successes or failures. Although the UN had multiple opportunities to expand, develop, and grow, it is proven that their repeated courses of action within committees are slacking off. With the future of infrastructure—the core to everyone's home, school, and health necessity—in everyone's life, it is something we take for granted and one harsh reality. From its international frameworks, architectural structures, and physical projects, it is not enough to sustain today's warfare, as shown by its lack of sustainability, funding, and overall development towards a brighter future. To press further than just awareness, there needs to be a stronger connection between the society, perspectives, and lives; a presence of leadership, commitment, with constantly developing and implementing, while being true to their actions in a reasonable timely frame. Acknowledging the limits within the organization, so much more could have been achieved and succeeded if the above were reviewed with a realistic, timely commitment. Their goals and aspirations were high yet shot too far, causing projects to be delayed, amended, and ultimately resulting in more backlash than approval. In conclusion, it is safe to say that the UN is an organization that can't fix everything, but its current work is falling behind. To catch up, there must be more of a connection and further plausible timing to achieve a “sustainable” brick-by-brick wall protecting the civilians and infrastructure they swore to protect.

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