Multilateralism in Action

Multilateralism in Action - Blogging Guide
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ABOUT MULTILATERALISM IN ACTION

What is Multilateralism in Action?

Multilateral processes and institutions are engaged in all of today's major challenges with regard to climate action, human rights, peace, security, humanitarian relief, sustainable development, gender, technology, youth, migration and displacement - to name just a few.

Multilateralism in Action provides a platform for think-pieces on cutting-edge issues regarding multilateralism and global governance written by leading experts in both practice and research. While the blog includes posts on a diverse array of topics regarding multilateral cooperation, its hallmark is a focus on multilateralism *in action*. Thus, beyond the analyses of international relations (IR) in a narrow sense, the blog aims to establish a conversation on the determinants, modalities, and outcomes of multilateral activities. This includes both actions at the global level and equally multilateral activities at the regional, national, and sub-national levels. In addition, the blog provides a forum to discuss various aspects of UN reform and features advice on careers in international organizations.

Multilateral processes of interest include the entire United Nations family, Bretton Woods and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), regional organizations, and other forms of multilateral processes.

Multilateralism in Action is hosted by the [International Organization and United Nations Studies](#) specialization at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

Audience

The blog's principal audiences include:

- UN practitioners and experts interested in new content and cutting-edge discussion;
- Scholars and researchers attracted to innovative ideas, publications & events on multilateralism;
- University students interested in learning more about international organizations, the UN and global affairs;
- The media and the general public interested in multilateral cooperation/UN affairs.

Multilateralism in Action publishes stories in a variety of formats, including news stories, opinion pieces, and book reviews.

Who can write for Multilateralism in Action?
SIPA and Columbia faculty, researchers, staff, students, and alumni can write for *Multilateralism in Action*, provided that the proposed piece fits our editorial requirements. In addition, the blog features posts by SIPA guest speakers or practitioners or scholars.

What is the process for writing and submitting a blog post?
Before you write a blog post, it is best to pitch your idea to Professor Daniel Naujoks, director a.i., IO/UNS specialization at SIPA (iouns@columbia.edu). In your pitch please:

- Summarize the main point of your article in one complete sentence (with subject, verb, and object);
- Provide other sources of information that may help us understand the story you have in mind, including reports, publications, links;
- Let us know if there is a specific date (international day, report/book launch, UN debate, etc.) that would be important for the timing of the publication.
- Add a 60-word short self-description/bio of the author(s) and a headshot.

If the idea is approved, please then submit your draft as a Word document to iouns@columbia.edu. All blog posts will undergo an editorial process before they are published.

CHECKLIST FOR BLOG POSTS

Before submitting the draft blog post, please go through this checklist:

- Is the text **under 1,000 words** (or 1,500 for book reviews)?

- Does the text follow the **style guidelines** spelled out in this document? Especially:

    o Does the post have a **compelling headline** (see tips below)?

    o Does the post **avoid jargon**?

    o Can the post be understood by a broad audience?

- Are you sending the text **in MS Word format**?

- Does the text include a **short self-description/bio** of the author(s) and a headshot? For one author, this can be up to 60 words, for 2 authors, a total of 80 words, and for 3 authors or more, 30 words per author.

- Do you or does your organization have a **photo that you want to suggest** to include in the blog post and that we can use free of royalty?

- Do you want to share **social media information**, esp. a Twitter handle, that we can tag in our communication?

HOW TO WRITE A BLOG POST

Be clear about what's new or what's the focus of your post. You should make this clear in the headline and near the beginning of the story, before you dive into the details. This is like a signpost, telling the reader where you're going to take them over the course of the article.

Consider your target audience. Multilateralism in Action stories are mainly geared toward people who are interested in multilateral organizations, but who don't necessarily know the jargon or have a deep background in the work of intergovernmental organizations or international relations. Always think about what the reader wants and needs from each post. Ask yourself: Will my audience be interested in this topic? Will they understand the term I've just used?

Show the reader why they should care about this story. Maybe it affects them personally? Or maybe it's just a really interesting or important discussion. If you're stuck, it helps to reflect on why you're motivated to write the post.

Avoid jargon. We want everyone to be able to understand and enjoy our articles. To simplify your language, it may help to imagine how you would explain this topic to an inquisitive eighth-grader, and write it that way. If you can't avoid using a technical term, please define it.

Keep your sentences short. The human brain can only parse so much information at once. Aim for sentences that are 25 words or shorter. (Tip: Read your story out loud. If you need to gasp for breath midway through a sentence, it's probably too long.)

Avoid passive voice. Passive voice means something was acted upon ("the milk was poured"; "mistakes were made") instead of someone performing an action ("she poured the milk"; "we made mistakes"). Use an active voice whenever you can. It will make your sentences clearer, shorter, and more engaging.

Add a short bio note to the end of the post. In up to 60 words, add your name, work title, areas of expertise, or important previous positions to help the reader to contextualize the author's background and unique perspective.

… More good tips here

WORD LIMITS

Word limits vary depending on the type of story. Research news and opinions should range from 600-1,000 words. Book reviews can be up to 1,500 words.

STYLE GUIDE

Multilateralism in Action uses AP style for its communications with a few exceptions. You can access the online guide through the Columbia Library. Just go to https://library.columbia.edu/ and enter "AP Style Guide" (without the quotes) in the search field.

Use mixed cap style for headlines. This means major words like nouns, verbs, etc. are capitalized; prepositions with four or more letters ("with," "through," etc.) are capitalized; and less significant words like "a" and "the" are lowercased.

In general, avoid the capitalization of people's titles. Example: Elazar Barkan, professor of international and public affairs, gave the lecture. However, named professorships need to be capitalized in any format. Example: Jeffrey D. Sachs, Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development, also attended. In the few cases where a person's title precedes that person's name, it is capitalized, as long it is a proper title (as opposed to "writer" or "researcher"). Example: Secretary-General António Guterres visited Malawi.

Do not use Dr., Mrs., Ms., Mr. or Rev. to refer to an individual. After initial identification, the individual's last name is sufficient.

Use only one space between sentences.

Information about references, course information, where to get more info, etc., should be hyperlinked within the story or run in italics at the end of a piece. We do NOT use numbered references or citations in the text in the way we would in an academic paper; we use hyperlinks.

HOW TO WRITE A HEADLINE

1. Many people read a headline and then decide, based on that, whether to keep reading —or not. So it must engage the reader immediately. If you neglect the headline (or "hed," in journalistic jargon), your effort at writing the post may be wasted. The hed cannot be an afterthought; it must the first order of business.

2. Heds must be concise. Try to limit them to around 10 words or less.

3. A good hed is usually NOT just a topic (boring!); it is a TAKE on the topic: what is new, interesting, informative or otherwise worth reading BEYOND the topic. A good hed may encapsulate the idea of the piece; or may just hint at it; or it may be a bit of attention-getting language that refers to something in the piece, but does not necessarily reveal its meaning straight off.

4. Heds can come in many forms: a question, a statement, a pun, a command, a list.

5. Do not use Columbia-specific acronyms (ex: MPA, SIPA) in headlines. These are a form of jargon that will limit your audience.

6. Identify heds that you like. Study how they work and use them as models. Examples of great heds can be found in anything from The New Yorker to the Washington Post.

7. Here are several online guides to writing heds. Some are aimed at the casual blogger; others, for the professional copy editor. Check out:

   1. www.copyblogger.com/how-to-write-headlines-that-work/
   2. www.notrain-nogain.org/Train/Res/CopyD/COP.asp
   3. http://web.ku.edu/~edit/heads.html
   4. www.jprof.com/onlinejn/webjn-headlines.html
   5. http://desktoppub.about.com/cs/techwriting/a/headlines.htm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT