

Desperate Hope

Reflections on Survival Pathways for Civilisation

By

Francis M. O'Donnell



Human civilisation is in decline everywhere, evidenced by wars, widening gaps, and growing displacement of huge populations, with up to a half-billion projected to flee in coming years. Our world is truly sick and our global institutions, the rule of law, security and multilateralism are failing. There is no time left. Yet, collectively we have the means to correct this course, and survive – but we cannot without ethical and accountable leadership, and broad, equitable citizen empowerment and participation.

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Preface

Human civilisation is much older than most people realise. It is not just an invention of ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, Greeks or Romans, let alone the cultures of the Indus, archaic Mesoamerica, or the Yangtze. Even long before Göbekli Tepe, humanity was engaged in sophisticated collaboration, producing the palaeolithic Acheulian, Mousterian and Aurignacian industries, art and ornament going back hundreds of thousands of years, and evidence of musical instruments, cultures and spirituality, including by our Neanderthal predecessors in central Europe.

The point of this recitation of antiquity is to debunk the exceptionalism claimed by some, notably now the ‘Third Rome’ (Moscow), in its neo-imperialism. There can be no room left today for unique claims to ancient heritage let alone modern supremacism, whether in Kievan Rus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Brussels, Capitol Hill or any Forbidden City. Only lately have we achieved a global civilisation ruled by agreed norms and laws, with common global institutions, after hundreds of thousands of years of human effort. But our “progress” has led us to mass extinctions, as human domination exhausts our ecosystems and biosphere, and as a few egoistic strongmen dominate humanity itself.

Yet genetics tells us we ALL descend from ancient civilisations of a thousand years or more ago. Ancient migrations with the inter-weaving generations of DNA and the exponential magnitude of our ancestral genealogy as we multiply two by two by two, etcetera lead us to realise that, generally, for any individual alive a thousand years ago on any continent, either no descendants survive today, or all of those on that continent are so descended. We all have Jewish, Celtic, Roman, Gothic, Slav, Muslim, Crusader, and Barbarian roots. We all descend from the Varangians and people of ancient Rus, etc. Beyond cherishing our heritage, we must preserve the inherent human dignity of all peoples, through the institutionalised solidarity painstakingly developed through decades of successful multilateralism. We are more than our nations, more than our myths, and need a globalisation of compassion not of instrumentalization of the person.

Multilateralism, which underpins the institutional expression of dialogue, negotiation, compromise, and common prioritisation on a global scale, espouses *common values, as universal*, and aspires to *pluralism through diversity*. We may think: much of this is in question today, but it *has always been*. The challenge is to understand the relative strengths, the trends, and the factors that play in *determining interim outcomes, for there is no ultimate result – we are in a world of flux and of continuous evolution* to a point, theoretical if not teleological, let alone theological, a fulfilment we know not, although Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Vladimir Vernadsky had some thoughts on that, in their *Noosphere*. Our time horizons are also paramount determinants and benchmarks, as we set goals with targets, the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, de-carbonization by 2050, and so on. Our experience tells us we *can* progress, even if we falter presently.

An era of huge biodiversity loss and mass extinctions is upon us. Our oceans and seas are polluted, with dead zones growing. Our atmosphere is increasingly toxic. Our water is scarce. Polar ice caps are melting and glaciers disappearing. In human development terms, in the last two years we have lost seven years, falling back to the position in 2016, but are heading for a quarter-century decline, if not worse, by 2025. Another deadly pandemic of catastrophic proportions looms as well as the increasingly pervasive intrusion in all life forms of toxic PFAS “*forever chemicals*”.

There is grave urgency, the risk rendered more acute by Russia's abandonment of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (2010), on top of its launching the biggest war since World War Two, at the very heart of Europe, in Ukraine. We need a new global human security architecture that would guarantee resilience in the face of mounting existential threats posed equally by mass extinctions and biodiversity loss, climate change, pandemic disorder, migration upheavals, and growing geostrategic instability due to erosion of the rule of international law, and failures of global governance. We also need to ensure the permanent service and subordination of artificial intelligence to human control and our responsible authority.

In this regard, we need to *explore the dynamic* between populism, liberalism and multilateralism; but also the core values of the UN system; the evolving role of the inter-governmental processes, and the complementarity with civil society and other vectors of influence, including corporate, as these affect the global commons on land, sea, and in air and outer space. These factors together will determine our priority challenges, and the consequent imperatives for structural and constituency reforms and resources of the UN, and indeed the Bretton Woods institutions, and other global instruments, at global and subsidiary levels. We need shared ethics for common laws.

The United Nations and other world institutions require radical surgery, greater representativity and democratisation, and dramatically-boosted resources to restore global trust, security, and stability. Now seemingly too-far from urgency, the '*Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow*' (SOTF) proposed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his report '*Our Common Agenda*' for 2024, is to uphold and reaffirm the UN Charter, restore trust between Member States, and reinvigorate multilateralism. With human development now in sharp decline, it aims to reinforce and expand existing commitments, building on an SDG summit in 2023.

A preparatory ministerial meeting will be held in September 2023 to precede the Summit of the Future. Together with the recommendations of the High Level Advisory Board (HLAB) on Effective Multilateralism, various policy briefs will advance work for the Summit. The HLAB has already sketched out its '*six transformational shifts*' in global governance to help deliver on the most urgent challenges in peace and security, the triple planetary crisis, growing economic inequalities, and a widening digital divide. A civil society-led Global Futures Forum (GFF) in New York in late March 2023, reviewed three dozen reform proposals and urged reforms for an improved United Nations with strong multi-stakeholder engagement. The ACUNS 2023 Annual Meeting on the theme of "*Making, Keeping, and Sustaining Peace*" marks the 75th anniversary of the advent of both special political missions and UN peacekeeping, and will be held in Washington, D.C., in June 2023.

Following on their appeal to the UN Secretary-General last 15 April 2022, a group of former UN officials joined forces in a "*Peacemaking Reflection Group*" (PRG), to actively advocate UN System reform and address imperatives for peace and justice provoked by Russia's war on Ukraine, and other existential challenges. In tandem with involvement in other networks, including those of current/former heads of state/government, this work has been facilitated by the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability. The PRG lately submitted a paper to the UN Secretariat in contribution to the UN Secretary-General's "*New Agenda for Peace*".

Introduction

Where there's hope, there's life. It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again.

- Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*¹

This paper tries to sketch out urgent measures to secure human sustainability in light of the growing existential threats mentioned. It argues that the accelerating pace of political, economic and technological change can only be managed - and catastrophe avoided – under conditions that include an explicit reaffirmation of universal norms, rapid resolution of all local conflicts that threaten systemic shocks, the restoration of global stability and the negotiation of globally-binding security guarantees within a framework of reformed global governance for the resilience of human civilisation.

The paper therefore explores perceptions and consequences of globalisation and makes the case that notwithstanding many benefits, there are diminishing returns from certain aspects of globalisation, under neo-liberal conditions. There is increasing competition and rivalry between great powers, and diminishing corporate diversity and competition in increasingly concentrated markets. It should be the other way round.

Diverging cultural values and trends complicate the need to converge on remedies let alone ideals, and can hamper effective multilateralism. Even before the Covid19 pandemic struck, social inequality has been rising in tandem with increasing polarisation, and a gross deterioration in the quality and courtesy of political discourse. Degraded rhetoric and growing demonisation reflect a loss of ideals, amplified by social media and fake news leading to a tangible and dangerous decline in the politics of compromise and cooperation, not just nationally but globally.

In this context this paper also explores the problem of market concentration as it affects free and fair competition, the changing nature and role of the media, media independence, and the quality of journalism. It is argued that globally-dominant monopolies and oligopolies distort markets, constrain entrepreneurship, and ultimately undermine good governance by engaging in regulatory and state capture. Massive concentrations of individual wealth enjoined by growing inequality and three major erosions of authority in developed countries (political, religious, and scientific) fuel populist extremism and manifest clear and present dangers. Combined, they threaten the fabric of our societies and global stability, dramatically worsened by the COVID pandemic impact and aggravating onset of near-irreversible climate change.

This raises a challenge to states, especially as governments increase their economic management both in the aftermath of the pandemic and the energy and trade crises, and to international or supra-national institutions, of preserving institutional integrity, democratic processes, the rule of law and of restoring social equity. It calls for active citizen engagement, amplified by social media, to hold leaders accountable, and to direct political change, transforming democracy into the rule of collective statecraft imbued with historic wisdom. But convergence can only prevail if capacities for peaceful negotiation, arbitration, and dispute resolution – rather than autocratic propaganda -

¹ Frank, Anne (1929-1945). *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1947, first published as *Het Achterhuis* (literally, "the back house"). A young Jewish girl who wrote her diary in hiding from Nazi persecution in Amsterdam, she and her family were eventually deported to the concentration camp in Auschwitz, and with her sister Margot, she was further transferred to another at Bergen-Belsen, where they died.

underpin efforts at consensus-building. This requires huge effort, now. At the same time, now is the moment to not only reform the veto-power and membership aspects of the UN Security Council, but to also develop a global convention settling the question of the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, mandating an obligatory code of conduct with the necessary mechanisms for independent review, enforcement, and regulation of competition.

A similar convention should tackle the issue of the growing impunity of trans-national Ultra-High Net Worth Individual billionaires, and prevent the practice of speculative “*disaster capitalism*”. Eradicating corruption and money-laundering, and obliging corporate and individual social and environmental responsibility should lie at the core of these conventions, which should also set limits on the accumulation of individual power and wealth, and explore the possible disqualification from public office of those whose wealth or income exceeds a specified level but whose disregard for the rule of law and democratic accountability induces flagrant abuse of economic, social and/or human rights, if convicted. This will also require some measure of reform of capital markets and international financial institutions, based also on the lessons of the past decade since the sub-prime crisis and the Great Recession of 2008, and the depressing effect of the current pandemic, the energy crisis and trade disputes.

The deadly earthquakes that lately struck south-east Turkey and northern Syria exposed the inadequacy of international emergency preparedness, despite pandemic struggles and humanitarian imperatives of the devastating conflicts in Syria itself, as well as in Ukraine and elsewhere. We need a *global resilience network*, parts of the architecture of which are actually already in place, but not yet converted to civilian use. Globally, humankind has the search & rescue capacity, the airlift infrastructure, the financial resources and the humanitarian laws and competencies to enable rapid rescue and relief, and reconstruction. What is lacking is the political vision and will, the protocols, and the leadership to convert current military and civil defence assets (“MCDA”) for humanitarian purposes .

Yet it is now thirty years since the UN, the Red Cross, NGOs and military leaders met in Brussels to chart a way forward. As the world ratchets up defence expenditures into a risky new arms race, political leaders need to face their responsibilities and ensure that MCDA infrastructure, assets, and personnel, are geared also towards human rights protection, natural and technological disaster prevention, mitigation and response, and emergency support to civilian populations. Converted military bases should become hubs of humanitarian awareness with personnel trained to save rather than destroy lives. Base conversion should enable creation of *global stability nodes* to assist in also managing mass displacement/migration, humanitarian corridors, safe havens, status determination, and unarmed civilian protection. This must be a global network, not just local or regional, and be part of a new *global resilience architecture* designed to tackle humanitarian crises, disasters, and the devastating impacts of climate change.

Much of the content of this essay has been presented in the author’s prior talks offered in the annual Global Baku Forum of world leaders hosted by the Nizami Ganjavi International Centre, in the Inter-Action Council of former world leaders, at the International Berlin Forum on Lost Universalism, and to the Association of Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe, and the Indiana Council on World Affairs, and in recent published articles on the urgent imperatives of more robust UN political engagement and institutional reform of global governance.

I. Emerging Globalisation

Where globalisation means, as it so often does, that the rich and powerful now have new means to further enrich and empower themselves at the cost of the poorer and weaker, we have a responsibility to protest in the name of universal freedom. Globalisation opens up the marvellous opportunities for human beings across the globe to share with one another, and to share with greater equity in the advances of science, technology and industries. To allow it to have the opposite effect is to threaten freedom in the longer term.

- Nelson Mandela, 22 November 2000²

I.1. The legal underpinnings of modern globalisation

From early influences to Westphalia

Bearing in mind the multi-millennial antiquity of such ancient codices as the Hammurabic Code, the Digest of Justinian, or even Brehon Law, as well as ancient treaties between sovereigns, modern *international* law began to emerge with the concept of *national* sovereignty that the Peace of Westphalia brought about in 1648, at the end of the devastating Thirty Years War, which killed millions of people in Europe. Perhaps if it were on a planetary scale it would have been the first truly *global* “world war”. The Thirty Years War in Europe was between the Catholics and the Protestants, the south and the north. Its early paradigm, that is, the Peace of Westphalia’s, was based on the theory of natural law, by Hugo Grotius of the Netherlands, who brought out the notion of *an international community*, and indeed of *freedom of the seas*³ and on the theory of sovereignty developed by Jean Bodin of France in the preceding century. By then the era of globalising European maritime imperialism was underway, led by Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, Ottoman and Spanish colonialism, running up against if not trading with land empires of Ming China, Moghul India, Safavid Persia, and Tsarist Russia, as well as various Arab and African empires and kingdoms, including in the slave trade.

Up to that time, and apart from such early democratic social structures as the Celtic parliamentary council of the Galatians at Drunemeton in Anatolia, the ancient Greek development of the *poleis*, or polis as the urban community of self-governing citizens, and indeed the institutions of the late Roman Republic, the principal source of authority was “divine law”, and there were no central legal subjects as in modern law, but rather, imperial, royal, or papal, rule. Sovereignty was vested in the monarch and there was no notion of state sovereignty, let alone popular democratic sovereignty. Instead, religious values were paramount e.g. in the era of late Christendom following the Dark Ages and feudalism, as evoked during the Crusades as well. But classical antiquity did give us the linguistic/conceptual foundations of The Enlightenment, and Magna Carta also played its role in subordinating the monarch to the law. Furthermore, the revolutions in France and the American colonies, upheld and codified the rights of the individual, and the spate of popular revolts from the Americas to Europe in the 19th century led to new nations or challenges to aristocracy and the advent of nascent egalitarianism with its consequent early development of principles of public service and administration. A *caveat*: this is a Euro-Atlantic “take” on this, and does not address the basis or consequences of what might have been considered globalisation in the Far East.

² Mandela, Nelson Rolihlahla. *Speech on receiving the Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum*, Memphis, TN, USA, 22 November 2000. Mandela received the Nobel Peace prize in 1993. [Nelson Mandela Foundation <https://archive.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/za-com-mr-s-919>]

³ Famously coining the phrase: “*Let no man possess what belongs to every man.*”

Emergence of modern international law

So, Westphalia de-personalized sovereignty, took it away from the hitherto largely absolute monarchs, and rendered it societal. The period from 1648 to the Congress of Vienna in 1815, was the first for the effective development of modern international law, as states became dominant players, and European empires expanded across the globe, bringing “*globalisation*” to its first systemic manifestation⁴. Ironically, European *imperialism* was perhaps the earliest truly *global* manifestation of systemic globalisation, generating empires “*on which the sun never set*”. We can see today how such a past comes back to haunt us through Russia’s self-righteous neo-imperialism under Vladimir Putin and its devastating and genocidal assault on Ukraine, a fellow UN-founding member.

More on that later, but for now, we note that through the 19th century, the extent and legal quality of the State was therefore increasingly *regulated*, internally and internationally, and the locus of sovereignty permanently shifted from emperors, kings and sovereign princes to their independent countries through the institution of the state, exercised by its government purportedly on behalf of its people or nation⁵. This required new treaties and laws to regulate boundaries between sovereign states and their mutual relations, and indeed between their colonies, leading also to the *law of neutrality* in international affairs, and the principle of *non-interference in the domestic affairs of another state*. Indeed, the famous *Fashoda Incident* in Sudan, was a climax of inter-imperial territorial disputes between the British and the French, in this case resolved peacefully, in large part thanks to the amicable tact and diplomacy between erstwhile adversaries Kitchener and Marchand in 1898, leading to the Anglo-French Convention⁶.

Not all such problems were resolved however, and the rising prosperity brought about by early globalisation and the industrial revolution also brought about huge systemic dislocations that eventually led us into the heyday of nationalism and two devastating world wars in the 20th century⁷. The globalisation of terrorism in the 21st century is also partly attributable to the perception of *double standards*, unresolved grievances, and rejection of globalisation and its effect on traditional cultures and associated values⁸. Liberal democracy and human rights activism are also perceived as a threat to local vested interests and power structures. In such alienated environments, organised criminal networks have found fertile terrain to exploit local underprivileged communities and to amplify their discontent in tandem with the globalisation of their criminal economy. The punitive politics of drug wars prosecuted against them failed to reduce the narcotics trade, and now require alternative strategies, reducing criminalization of drug use and promoting public health, community development and civil society empowerment.

⁴ Husslein-Arco, Agnes (et al. eds.). *Europe in Vienna – The Congress of Vienna 1814/15, Belvedere*, Hirmer Verlag GmbH, Munich, 2015 [ISBN 978-3-902805-66-9].

⁵ The story of the *Code Vicinal* in Napoleonic France is illustrative of such transformations, sometimes prompted by a globalised cholera pandemic. It laid a foundation for regional economic development. See *The Cholera Pandemic of the 1830s, the Code Vicinal and modernization in France* [https://www.academia.edu/43085909/The_Cholera_Pandemic_of_the_1830s_the_Code_Vicinal_and_modernization_in_France].

⁶ Moorehead, Alan. *The White Nile*, Penguin Books, London, 1973 [ISBN 0 14 0036849] (pp. 336-342)

⁷ For a good historical overview with a primarily economic analysis, see the excellent article by Anne O. Krueger on the topic, “*The End of Globalization?*” which appeared in the “Great Decisions” journal of the Foreign Policy Association for 2020; New York, 2021 [ISBN: 978-0-87124-275-4].

⁸ However, the role of European terrorism a half century ago, e.g. the far left *Baader-Meinhof Gang*, *Red Brigades/Brigate Rosse*, *Action Directe*, as well as *ETA*, the *IRA*, and *PKK*, in rejecting establishment authority should be studied as an influence on later movements in Latin America and the Middle East.

I.2. Globalisation at work

From empires to global organisations

The *Congress of Vienna* in 1815 led to new norms for diplomatic relations between states, primarily major empires at the time, and the birth of the first globally-oriented modern international organisations, with the International Telegraph Union (1865), the Universal Postal Union (1874), the International Association of Railway Congresses (1884) and the International Office of Public Health (1907). Initially from conferences, including also the participation of non-governmental representatives and experts, to annual general assemblies, international organisations began to push for common standards and global regulations⁹.

As a long-term result, from today's perspective, a great achievement of multilateralism and the United Nations system is the enormous growth in the body of international law and global norms, through multiple treaties, conventions, and frameworks, and their standard-setting institutions, organisations, and agencies¹⁰. There are also the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and more recently the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), i.e. the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Many would agree that the UN and most of these other institutions with the exception perhaps of WTO, or maybe even with WTO, are now in long-overdue need of major reform. But how did we get to this point?

Beyond the imperial pretensions of various powers into the 19th century, the *Monroe Doctrine* of the United States adopted in 1823 to prevent further European adventurism in the Americas after the independence of many from Spain, declared that the New World and the Old World were to remain distinct *spheres of influence*. However America's ability to enforce it only came about gradually with its accruing military and naval strength built up after its Civil War, enabling it to play a premier role in world affairs by World War One, and with Roosevelt's influence on multilateralism and non-intervention, to advocate for a "League of Nations of the Americas", creating the *Organisation of American States* in 1948. Meanwhile Europe's Habsburgs and Braganzas played imperial ambitions respectively in Mexico and Brazil, eventually failing as republics emerged. Dutch, French, and British colonies continued to survive.

The League of Nations and the United Nations

The Covenant of the *League of Nations* was signed in 1919 as part of the *Treaty of Versailles*, much influenced by the United States which however never joined it. The first global organisation with a remit to preserve world peace, it ran from 1920 to 1946, and grew to a total of 63 countries, many being lingering empires and their associated colonies. It also granted mandates to some imperial powers to govern territories such as *Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Syria* and former German colonies in what later became *Burundi, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Togo*. Its final demise was brought about after the end of World War Two, when the allied victors agreed on what they felt would be a more effective organisation, the *United Nations*.

⁹ Reinalda, Bob. *From the Congress of Vienna to Present-Day International Organizations*, UN Chronicle, December 2014, No. 3 Vol. LI, Conference Diplomacy [<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/congress-vienna-present-day-international-organizations>]

¹⁰ Shaw, Malcom N. *International Law*, Second Edition, published by Grotius Publications Limited, Cambridge, 1986 [ISBN: 0-906496-37-3]. For a deeper study of the field see: Brownlie, Ian. *Principles of Public International Law*, Fourth Edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990 [ISBN: 0-19-825639-6].

The advent of the United Nations in succession to the League of Nations extended these lingering *post-colonial territorial mandates*, but the most egregious continuing failure relates to Palestinian aspirations for a viable sovereign state in accordance with the 1947 *UN Partition Plan*¹¹ and multiple subsequent UN Security Council resolutions and peace accords. The sense that Palestinians pay the price of European pogroms and the Nazi Holocaust that led to the birth of Israel in their country, underlies the most grievous sense of Western *double standards* felt across the Arab and wider Islamic worlds and which has brought untold death, misery, and instability to the whole Middle East, to this day¹².

De-colonisation and its quandaries

The birth of the UN also saw allies with remnant empires squabble to retain colonies in conflict with the *principle of self-determination* enshrined in the new UN Charter. Whilst those powers regarded their colonies as sources of raw materials and migrant labour, they did not guarantee them free trade nor freedom of movement, except under certain conditions of metropolitan integration, and even if some trade was free, it was not necessarily fair. Assumptions of a potential Euro-African economic zone played into rivalries over *spheres of influence*. That hegemonic notion itself runs counter to the ethos of the UN Charter, and should not be confused with its Chapter VIII for *regional arrangements*, let alone Chapter IX on *international economic and social cooperation*.

The *principle of non-interference* conflicted with the *principle of self-determination* in the process of de-colonisation and independence, warranting referral to the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter. Indonesia served as an example in regard to its independence, which had been declared after the end of Japanese occupation, but rejected by its former colonial power, the Netherlands. The Ukrainian SSR brought the case of Indonesia, as a threat to world peace after two years of conflict, to the UN Security Council in London in 1946. It questioned whether the Netherlands, claiming that Indonesian matters were internal to its realm, supported by Belgium, France, and the UK, did not violate article 1, paragraph 2 of the UN Charter, on the right to self-determination, Ukraine called, with support from the USSR, for Dutch expulsion from the UN. The USA and others gradually accepted the right to self-determination over the principle of non-interference defended by the Dutch, and after several Council deliberations and renewed conflict, in December 1949, the Netherlands finally accepted Indonesian independence¹³.

The independence of Algeria in 1962 was another case, achieved after years of struggle against France which regarded it as an integral part of its metropole and thus part of a European integration process. That Algerian struggle was partly influenced by the Irish struggle, noting that freedom can only be achieved “*at the price of heavy sacrifices*”. As Hargas points out: “*there is nothing like a European nation to try to open the eyes of an audience which may sometimes be taken by colonial ideology on the absurd myth according to which subject peoples are inherently devoid of civilisation*”¹⁴.

¹¹ UN General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947.

¹² The *Sykes-Picot Agreement* of 1916 and the *Balfour Declaration* of 1917 are as widely despised in the Middle East today as the *Berlin Conference's* imperial partition of Africa in 1884-1885 is on that continent.

¹³ De Guzman, Moises Montero. *The Indonesian Question before the Security Council 1946-1949*. (Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 8645), Montana State University, USA, 1952 [<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9680&context=etd>]

¹⁴ Hargas, Slimane. *What Algeria owes to Ireland's Struggle for Independence*, OrientXXI, 5 July 2022 [<https://orientxxi.info/magazine/what-algeria-owes-to-ireland-s-struggle-for-independence.5750>]. For Hargas, the *Anglo-Irish Treaty* of 1921, which pitched Ireland into civil war, was a “fool’s deal”, partition being “*one of the great misfortunes that can befall a nation*”.

Europe: from colonialism to integration

It must be noted that the de-colonisation process involved fading European empires, i.e. primarily Belgian, British, Dutch, French, Portuguese and Spanish colonial territories. Other imperial domains remained largely untouched, whether still formally empires or republics/federations, such as Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Japan, Mexico, or Russia, all of which have or had emperors, and the USA, which while a non-monarchical federation, not only accrued many signal attributes and power of an empire, but remains the world's most hegemonic power, driven by liberal capitalist culture, its military-industrial complex and a doctrine of full spectrum dominance. On the European front, aided by US influence, European integration also had to address the status of once-colonial European overseas territories and dominions, namely whether they should be integral to the evolving, deepening and enlarging European convergence (from the Coal and Steel Community to the European Union), or somehow associated if not wholly independent. To this day, some of these "overseas countries and territories" are considered part of the metropole, and hence within the EU (e.g. French Guyana), and others remain or chose to stay outside (Greenland is a special case). These political geographies changed when the UK joined the EEC in 1973 and again when it left the EU in 2020 after the 2016 Brexit vote, affecting in the process the relationships between Commonwealth members with the EU.

Nonetheless, at the regional level, the emergence of the European Union from the early Coal and Steel Community, stands apart, as *the most advanced experiment of a supra-national community of states* based entirely on consensual convergence, subsidiarity, and increasing integration - as distinct from the spread of empires and the survival even to this day of huge post-imperial domains, such as Brazil, China, India, Russia, and the United States - so the EU in that sense is quite exceptional - Brexit notwithstanding.

Fail-safe peacekeeping

The abortion of Palestine, arguably the greatest failure of full de-colonisation, yielding instead to the colonisation of occupied residual Palestinian lands in defiance of international law and UN Security Council resolutions, exposed the first structural deficiency of the United Nations, and the unwillingness of the international community to uphold its own norms and guarantee its Charter's most fundamental premise, instead inflicting "*succeeding generations*" of Palestinians with "*the scourge of war and untold sorrow*". This empty cradle of a stillborn country, congenital twin of Israel, saw the emergence of UN peacekeeping, and roles for which the UN's original design was increasingly found wanting.

The mere fact that the oldest peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) established in 1949 to supervise implementation of the Arab-Israeli Armistice Agreements through various bi-lateral mixed armistice commissions, still continues, is as much a reflection of the failure of the international community to resolve the core original and multiple ensuing conflicts, as the fact that millions of Palestinians are now in their fourth or fifth generation of exile abroad, as witnessed first-hand by this author since childhood as the son of an Irish UNTSO peacekeeper.

Although independent since 1922, Ireland only joined the UN in 1955, but mindful of articles 1.2 and 73 of the Charter, its position on de-colonisation was unequivocal, especially during the 1960s when it placed the United Nations at the core of its foreign

policy, and advocated for self-determination globally¹⁵. And far from being an imperial instrument, the tiny and under-resourced Irish Defence Forces have a distinguished record of serving on overseas peacekeeping operations since 1958, which has been described as “*the longest unbroken record of any nation in the world*”¹⁶. But there is little to rejoice in such misplaced pride: the UN peacekeeping’s genesis, and replication elsewhere, like the partition of Ireland, was supposed to be a temporary “fix” not a permanent fixture.

Unfortunately, peace, if defined as the absence or cessation of conflict, is not enough. Ceasefires freeze conflicts but do not resolve them. The same can be said of victories and defeats. It could be argued that it is not “*an agenda for peace*” that is required, except as a stepping stone to collaborative progress in the common human condition. That broader goal, “*to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom*”, as the Charter preamble says, must be the ultimate goal of peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building.

Independence, development and stability

And that is where the wider ambit of the UN system’s field work has been. The United Nations and its agencies were at the forefront of efforts to develop these new member states in the third quarter of the twentieth century. And if this author were to go back to the early days of his UN career in Africa, we were dealing with development in countries that had only recently been colonies and where there was a very slim degree of human development, in terms of education and the capabilities for self-government, which is why organisations like the UNDP, which resulted from the merger in 1966 of its predecessors¹⁷, the Special Fund and EPTA (Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, created in 1949), and a multitude of specialised agencies were so involved in trying to help create the foundations of sound economic development and government in those countries.

The early decades of such UN development work were confined by the “*tripartite nature of technical cooperation*”, where the stakeholders were defined as government, UNDP as the funding agency, and the UN system’s specialised and technical agencies as executing agencies. Many of the specialised and executing UN system agencies’ “experts” in technical cooperation sectors were re-cycled former colonial administrators from the 1950s through the 1980s. Furthermore, working with civil society and the private sector was effectively excluded due to the Cold War ideological divide between socialism and capitalism, East and West. In due course technical cooperation between developing countries themselves emerged, but with the end of the Cold War, the spread of economic neo-liberalism, predatory capitalism, and corrupt privatisation, induced a reaction from

¹⁵ During this period the Foreign Minister was Frank Aiken, with a generous remit to promote an independent Irish position in international relations, under the government of Taoiseach Seán Lemass who sought Irish membership in the European Economic Community in tandem with the UK (both joined later in 1973). See *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, v. 12: 1961-1965, Royal Irish Academy, 2020. As Hargas points out (*op. cit.*) Frank Aiken was the first Western diplomat to defend publicly at the UN General Assembly in September 1957, the right of the Algerian people to self-determination, albeit the subsequent Irish support was spotty, limited by Ireland’s “geography” until Algerian independence was achieved.

¹⁶ *Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces*, Government of Ireland, Feb. 2022, Appendix 4, p. 181.

¹⁷ Per UN General Assembly resolution 2029 (XX) of 22 November 1965; a later resolution 2688 (XXV) of 11 December 1970 gave developing countries representation in UNDP’s Governing Council.

civil society driven by environmental and social concerns towards a new thrust for sustainability, and in some cases away from “growth” as argued by Ariel François¹⁸.

Ironically, the transition to post-colonial independence in the Arab world was significantly promoted by minority and largely urban indigenous and generally better-educated Christian communities, several examples of which are given by El Hassan Bin Talal who attributes the emergence of various nationalisms partly to prominent Christians¹⁹. This paved the way for initially secular regimes, and a few revolutions shifting from monarchies to republics, increasingly socialist under Soviet influence.

In Latin America, whose countries mostly achieved independence from colonial masters in the early 19th century, *liberation theology* held sway for many decades after Vatican II, as a reaction to extreme poverty, entrenched injustice, and elite authoritarianism²⁰. It favoured a more holistic *emancipation of indigenous peoples*, taking some inspiration from African national liberation movements, but also from leftist writers espousing socialist antidotes to right-wing regimes propped up by the CIA and US corporate interests²¹. Later insurgencies morphed into armed conflicts increasingly reliant on globalised criminal networks and the illicit narcotics and weapons trade as happened in Afghanistan, the Balkans, and South-East Asia, and indeed in many other theatres of war and terrorism.

In the Far East and Africa, Christian missionaries eased the transition to independence having already established clinics, hospitals, and schools and in some cases laid the foundations for universities. The early elites of those countries frequently emerged from the such educational institutions and patronised them, often drawing on indigenous social structures and blending with syncretic cultural heritage. However, in Africa in particular, national identities coterminous with the borders of the newly-independent states proved difficult to nurture, due to the socially-arbitrary boundaries of many of these states, inherited from the imperialist partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the subsequent scrambles of colonial powers into the early 20th century, ignoring the ethnic/linguistic identities that could have formed the basis for new nations and a host of smaller ones especially in Congo, Ethiopia and Nigeria. Beyond the Biafran war, these stresses erupted again in ethnic conflicts in the 1990s, fomented by local warlordism inspired less by Cold War ideologies than by resource-grabs and arms trafficking, supplanted today by Islamist extremism and Russian plunder by its Wagner mercenaries.

Nonetheless, by now through economic development, trade, commerce, travel and sport, the “*national*” identities of these newly-independent countries have grown, and their progress, and indeed the progress of all, is one of the great multilateral successes of

¹⁸ François, Ariel. *Let's Get Rid of Growth – Moving Away from Capital-led Globalization*, published by Our Future World, 2016 [ISBN-13: 978-1484036556]. He argues that “growth”, as an economic mantra, is no longer sustainable, no longer generates large-scale employment, and instead concentrates wealth in the hands of a tiny oligarchy while destroying our environment and biosphere.

¹⁹ El Hassan Bin Talal, Crown Prince of Jordan. *Christianity in the Arab World*, Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, published by Arabesque Int., London, 1995 [ISBN: 1-898259 05 4]

²⁰ Vidler, Alec R. *The Church in an Age of Revolution – 1789 to the Present Day*, Pelican Books, 1961 (1st edition; revised 1974) and Penguin Books, 1990 [ISBN: 978-0-14-013762-0].

²¹ Chomsky, Noam. *Deterring Democracy*, Vintage Books (Random House), 1992 [ISBN: 0-09-913501-9]. In his wringing critique of US foreign policy, Chomsky identifies US tobacco companies as original narco-traffickers, lobbying for US sanctions against those countries, e.g. Thailand, unless restrictions on imports of American tobacco were lifted (pp. 123-127).

globalisation, even if it was not without those growing pains and lessons learnt, including also the weakness of coordination and the inadequacies of consultations between recipient governments and UN specialised and executing agencies, rivalry between the same (continuing sadly to this day), the dominance of Western interests, even after UNDP was created partly to overcome these problems²². And as for the Bretton Woods institutions, the structural weaknesses in their design and governance are now being exposed by the economic rise of China, challenging the dominance of US influence²³. Azerbaijan's effort to revive the *Non-Aligned Movement* may help give greater voice to the developing countries, countering big power influence, whether American, European, Chinese or indeed Russian.

Diversification, cooperation, transition

During that time, many other multi/bi players, including NGOs and the private sector, joined the field and the pre-eminence of the UN system rôle declined in the decades that followed as countries took increasing charge of their own development towards the end of the 20th century. That complexity was itself a reflection of some progress, waves of political turmoil notwithstanding²⁴. In fact, by the 1990s, the number of “*expatriate development experts/workers*” active in Africa was estimated to be about the same as the number of professional African emigrés working in industrialised countries. Efforts to reverse the African “brain drain” through *transfer of knowledge through expatriate nationals* (TOKTEN) built on Turkish experience, and would later be piloted in central and eastern European countries in post-Communist transition, usually on a short-term basis for capacity-building purposes²⁵. But the terminology used to describe large-scale migratory experiences still bears colonialist undertones: “*expatriates*” coming from the industrialised north, “*migrants*” coming from the south, even in the same countries where both meet, albeit with starkly different incomes, lifestyles, and comparative enjoyment, or not, of basic labour rights, e.g. in Gulf states. Such migratory trends have also become a feature of globalisation, as has the surge in asylum-seeking displacees and refugees.

The evolution of technical, scientific, and investment cooperation played a key role in the emergence of an increasingly global market economy, boosted significantly after the end of the Cold War, and even more so with the information revolution. In addition, notwithstanding many inter-state conflicts (such as in Korea, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and the Falklands), warfare became increasingly internal rather than inter-state after the end of the Cold War. There had been an overall real decline in the scale of fatalities due to armed conflict²⁶, but most of all, we have had *no World War since 1945*, plenty of regional ones, but no world war.

²² For an early critique of development “assistance”, see Mahyar Nashat’s *National Interests and Bureaucracy versus Development Aid*, Tribune Editions, Geneva, 1978 (pp.187-188).

²³ Paton, Bill. *Is China a Developed Country? USA changing the rules again in the ‘rules-based international order’*, Beijing, 3 April 2023 [<https://www.billpaton.com/post/is-china-developed>].

²⁴ For later progress in UNDP’s development work see Roy Morey’s *The United Nations at Work in Asia – An Envoy’s Account of Development in China, Vietnam, Thailand and the South Pacific*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Jefferson, North Carolina, USA, 2014 [ISBN: 978-0-7864-7871-2]. Note especially his observations on China and its eventual ineluctable global rivalry with the USA.

²⁵ For an insight in the United Nations system role, and UNDP in particular, in development work, see Craig N. Murphy’s *The United Nations Development Programme – A Better Way?* Cambridge University Press, New York/US & Cambridge/UK, 2006 [ISBN 0-521-68316-5].

²⁶ The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) records and classifies armed conflicts around the world for 1945–2020 distinguishing between wars and minor conflicts: wars defined by battle-related deaths (BRD) in excess of 1,000 per year, while minor conflicts entail BRD between 25 and 1,000 annually. See Strand, Håvard & Hegre, Håvard: *Trends in Armed Conflict 1946-2000*, Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 2021.

The number of war deaths had been declining since 1946 from around half a million people per year to less than 100,000 in recent years, although this trend had begun to reverse in 2021, even before Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Much of the conflict violence correlates to instability following the collapse of the USSR and turmoil in its former proxies, or to the rise of Islamist fundamentalism.

Resurgent imperialism

Hence, it is easy today to forget *the era of de-colonisation*, and how its ebullient *explosion of new states* magnified enormously the global reach of the United Nations, and the international system. But it would be wrong to consider that era as long passed. No sooner had decolonisation of the old fading empires largely been completed, than some of the big powers, declining in influence, desired the "*Empire to strike back*". The Reagan-Thatcher, or the *Anglo-American era* if you wish, was the beginning of the *radical questioning of the United Nations*, and in due course, what became an *assault on multilateralism*, especially under Trump, but more deleteriously under Putin's aggression to Ukraine.

Why was this 1945 entity no longer "*fit-for-purpose*"? It failed to address the Cold War confrontation between East and West. It was also the beginning of the *neo-con*, politically, and the *neo-liberal*, economically, that led to *vast de-regulation* and by the 1990s and the end of the Soviet Union, the rush to privatisation, "*shock therapy*", the theft of the global commons, global public goods, the rape of resource-rich developing countries afflicted by what became known as the "*resource curse*" and often the empowerment of state-capture by much the same predatory economic interests²⁷.

The decline in multilateralism raises the spectre of *neo-imperialist* scrambles into Africa, as well as in Russia's revival of its imperialism in regard to its "*near-abroad*", the risks of which were foreseen by Zbigniew Brzezinski observing in 1994 that "*Russia can either be an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both*". He argued for an expansion of NATO eastward "*to avoid a security vacuum between NATO and Russia*" at a time of political instability when Ukraine's nuclear stockpiles were still intact and believing such a security vacuum would "*only tempt those in Russia who are more ready to opt for empire than democracy*". Instead he advocated for a true American-Russian partnership and "*a simultaneous treaty of alliance and cooperation between NATO and Russia*"²⁸.

By 1997, even after Ukraine's yielding its nuclear arsenal under (subsequently useless) guarantees of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, such optimism was already illusory, as Anne Reid noted "*there are plenty of ways Russia could try to force Ukraine back into the fold. Nobody expects tanks to roll into Kiev as they did into Grozny, but Russia could stir up secessionism among ethnic Russian in Crimea and the Donbass, as it did in Moldova, Georgia and Tadzhikistan*"²⁹. Q.E.D., a schoolteacher might conclude.

²⁷ For a treatment of the misgivings about IMF approaches and the misfitting "*Washington Consensus*" policies that led to much disillusion with globalisation, see Joseph A Stiglitz's critique: *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W.H. Norton, New York & London, 2002 [SBN: 0-393-05124-3]

²⁸ Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *The Premature Partnership*, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, March/April 1994 (p.72) [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership>]

²⁹ Reid, Anne. *Borderland – A Journey through the History of Ukraine*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1997; Phoenix (Orion Books, Ltd.), London, 1998 (4th impression 2003) (pp. 43, 231) [ISBN: 1-84212-722-5]

Failures of diplomacy and emancipation

Why the return to warfare, let alone invasion? From one angle, but not the only one, if diplomacy has failed, so too – at least in some cases - has development and post-Cold War transition. This is partly because while the focus was on development projects, economic rather than social or political, *inadequate attention was paid to building good governance institutions*, let alone to the broad diffusion and awareness-raising of the global norms and standards in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

As a result, the culture of *personal* civic, political and economic emancipation as distinct from *national* liberation and independence, did not underpin the emergent national politics and governing institutions. Higher education was more often than not the privilege of increasingly corrupt elites. Aging authoritarian father-figure leaders were not held accountable by a citizenry that was itself ill-informed if not under-educated. Under these circumstances, civil society did not flourish and any independent media was nascent and under-developed. During the proxy rivalries across Africa, of Communist East and Capitalist West, private entrepreneurship also grew slowly and only in those economies that were not under a rigorous socialist thumb. *Mutatis mutandis* much the same applied in the former Soviet space, devoid of democratic heritage, let alone the Enlightenment.

Structural mal-adjustment and the debt trap

As for Africa (and indeed parts of Latin America) even after considerable progress was made by the 1990s with literacy programmes and basic education advances in Africa, these were not helped by ill-advised “*structural adjustment programmes*” (SAPs) vaunted by the Bretton Woods institutions, introduced to impose fiscal policies and budgetary discipline without any regard to human rights, and often undercutting vocational education and employment programmes to the detriment of social peace and the very stability required to encourage foreign direct investment. Part of the problem lay in those developing countries availing of loans and contracting sovereign debt without proper legal safeguards, and often with the borrowed funds being stolen by corrupt leaders and officials thereby saddling their poor with the burden of those SAPs³⁰.

To counter these deficiencies, UNITAR launched a successful programme of training in the legal aspects of debt management for the Least-Developed Countries in the 1990s, but it was not until 2018 that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund adopted a multi-pronged approach (MPA) to address these countries’ debt vulnerabilities, rendered more urgent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating debt burdens³¹.

The debt trap continues to afflict those countries that cannot hold their governments adequately accountable for fiscal rectitude, ethical integrity and transparency. In worst cases, it may lead to the *loss of strategic assets* in debt-equity swaps, e.g. to China.

³⁰ Hancock, Graham. *Lords of Poverty – The freewheeling lifestyles, power, prestige and corruption of the multibillion-dollar aid business*, Mandarin (an imprint of the Octopus Publishing Group), Macmillan London Ltd., London, 1989 & 1991 [ISBN 0-7493-0503-7]. See pages 56-64 for Hancock’s stringent indictment of SAP policies.

³¹ International Monetary Fund. *IMF Executive Board Concludes the Update on the Joint IMF-WB Multipronged Approach to Address Debt Vulnerabilities*, Washington D.C., 14 December 2020 [<https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/PP/2020/English/PPEA2020066.ashx>]

I.3. The metrics of globalisation

Globalisation indices

We will return to these issues with consequences shortly, but first some observations on measuring globalisation. One of the early pioneers of the metrics of globalisation was the AT Kearney corporate effort to develop a Globalisation Index back in 2002, but many others have proliferated since. Ireland dominated the list at the top as *the most extraverted economy and society in the world* - still riding on its *Celtic Tiger*. Proportionate to its small size today, Ireland has an enormously large diaspora, 70 million people across the world who can claim recent Irish descent. Why is it so big? Because it was a country of 8 million in the 1840s, and would have been as densely populated as Britain or the Netherlands today were it not for the Great Famine. So, Ireland is an extremely *outrached* country, recent prosperity greatly helped by EU membership and being now also the anglophone gateway to EU capital, the European hub of digital giants, and with low corporate tax rates, and substantial ensuing foreign investment (mainly American).

Many other such indices followed, such as the G-Index (J. Randolph, 2001), the CSGR³² Globalisation Index (Lockwood and Redoano 2005), the Maastricht Globalisation Index (Martens and Zywiets 2006), and later the KOF Index of Globalisation (Dreher, Gaston, and Martens 2008)³³. They contained differences in the number of countries and years covered, and in the nature and weighting of many indicators. One of the recurring observations in these indices was that the countries that consistently ranked at the top were, for the most part, European countries. Regional dimensions of integration were also explored in subsequent studies. More recently worth noting was the comparative analysis of previous indices in an ADB paper *A New Index of Globalisation: Measuring Impacts of Integration on Economic Growth and Income Inequality*³⁴.

We will next focus on some other measures for reasons that will be apparent. The *Human Development Index*, introduced in 1990, was in part a response to the domination of GDP over economic and political policy, brought about by Amartya Sen and Mahboub Ul Haq under the leadership of - of all things - a venture capitalist from California who could see beyond profit, William Draper III, the UNDP Administrator at the time. Later, we will look at other indices, e.g. of democracy, freedom, and transparency.

Impact of globalisation on human development

The first Human Development Report coincided, from a historic point of view, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Iron Curtain, and the end of the Cold War, hence a focus on some basic needs such as income, education and longevity. Already, by 1970, the post-war successes of the Soviet command economy had also brought dramatic improvements to the lives of its citizens, and more so for the *nomenklatura*. Its expertise in industrialisation and science was also a major contributor to third world development.

The USSR was by then second only to the USA, even though Soviet productivity was far below. But as the pace of change accelerated, Soviet utter dependence on top-down

³² Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick, UK.

³³ Euro Indicators. *Selected Readings – Focus on: Measuring Globalisation*, December 2007
[<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4187653/5775037/LN-SR122007-EN.PDF/2b535cd7-edf0-4e66-a9de-ddaa41217b28>]

³⁴ ADB paper by Hyeon-Seung Huh and Cyn-Young Park, and published by the Asian Development Bank as no. 587 in its Economics Working Paper Series, July 2019.

decision-making could not keep up, and huge inefficiencies emerged, the more the USSR economy sought integration into the emerging global economy³⁵. Centralisation and ‘*campaignology*’ became obstacles resulting in unbalanced growth, as doctrinaire decisions were taken in ignorance of market dynamics, despite advice of Soviet economists such as Nikolai Petrakov.

The Human Development Index

By the 1970s Japan was also emerging as an alternative model of development, neither Soviet nor strictly Western. In fact, by 1990 Japan ranked on top of the list for *human development*, in the world’s first report on Human Development³⁶. In comparison, the USSR ranked in 26th place, the USA 19th, Ireland 17th, Finland 11th, the UK 10th, and Norway in 6th place. China ranked in 65th place³⁷. The *Human Development Index* (HDI) included the new post-Soviet states for the first time in the 1993 report, where we see Japan still in 1st place, the UK still in 10th, a re-united Germany in 12th place, Norway up to 3rd place, but Finland and Ireland down to 14th and 21st places respectively, whereas the USA had climbed to 6th place and Russia down to 37th place much above Ukraine at 45th. China had fallen dramatically to 101st place³⁸.

Fast forward to 2006, Norway had risen to 1st place, and Japan had fallen to 7th³⁹. Ireland had risen to 4th place and the UK fell to 18th, *a dramatic first historic reversal* in comparative standing. Finland had returned upward to 11th, but Germany had fallen to 21st place. The USA had dropped to 8th place and Russia and Ukraine had fallen out of the ranks of high human development to medium at 65th and 77th places respectively. China had climbed up to 81st place. A revised method for calculating the HDI was introduced in the 2010 report, using GNI per capita (PPP\$), rather than GDP. The categories were also changed to place the top 51 in “*very high human development*”, the next 54 in “*high*” rather than medium, and those below that in “*medium*” and “*low*”.

In the Human Development Report (HDR) for 2016, Norway remained on top, Japan had fallen further to 17th place⁴⁰ - remember in 1990 it was in 1st place, Ireland badly affected by the 2008 recession and German bond holders, had fallen but then recovered to 8th place, replaced by Germany in 4th. The UK climbed marginally upward to 16th. The USA had fallen further to 10th place, but Russia had recovered to join these ranks of the “*very high*” albeit at 49th place. Ukraine, in contrast, had fallen further behind to 84th place, badly affected not least by the Russian invasion of 2014, occupation and unrecognized annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing conflict in its Donbass region. It remained barely above China, which dropped back to 90th place.

³⁵ Nove, Alec. *The Soviet Economy*, Third Edition, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970 (pp. 313-354).

³⁶ *Human Development Report 1990*, published by the United Nations Development Programme and the Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1990 [ISBN: 0-19-506481-X].

³⁷ The particular selection of countries used here and on the following pages for comparison purposes derives from a talk given by the author to a seminar of the School of Civic Education (formerly Moscow School of Political Studies) under the auspices of Association of Schools of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe in Helsinki on 12 March 2018.

³⁸ *Human Development Report 1993* published by the United Nations Development Programme and the Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1993 [ISBN: 0-19-506457-8].

³⁹ *Human Development Report 2006 - Beyond Scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis* published by the United Nations Development Programme and Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006 [ISBN: 0-230-50058-7].

⁴⁰ *Human Development Report 2016 – Human Development for Everyone*, published by the United Nations Development Programme, New York, 2006 [ISBN: 978-92-1-126413-5].

Human Development and the Anthropocene

In the Human Development Report, for 2020, the principle theme was: *The Next Frontier – Human Development and the Anthropocene*. Norway still remained on top for the 16th time, and Ireland climbed back to 2nd place, shared with Switzerland. Germany fell to 6th, the UK rose to 13th, and the USA fell further to 17th place, Japan lay at 19th place shared with Israel, and Russia fell to 52nd place. Ukraine inched back up to 74th. Mainland China rose slightly to 85th place, but Hong Kong ranked extremely well separately at 4th place. Hong Kong was treated as a distinct economic territory for these purposes. In the meantime, a special report, *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene*⁴¹, launched in February 2022, showed that *people’s sense of safety and security is at a low in almost every country*, including the richest countries, despite years of upward development success, and assessed before the COVID 19 pandemic struck. The report finds that 6 out of 7 people worldwide are *plagued by feelings of insecurity, and declining levels of trust*. Global development progress does not automatically lead to a greater sense of security, as the spread of the COVID pandemic affected everyone worldwide, one way or another. Those benefiting from some of the highest levels of good health, wealth, and education outcomes are reporting *even greater anxiety* than 10 years ago. To tackle the disconnect between development and perceived security, *we need greater solidarity across borders and a new approach to development*; allowing people to live free from want, fear, anxiety and indignity.

Uncertainty ahead

The 2021/22 Human Development Report, “*Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*”, released late in September 2022, revealed that for the first time in the thirty-two years of its reporting the Human Development Index (HDI) *declined globally* for two years in a row⁴². Human development fell back to its 2016 levels, reversing much of the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. As the report points out, “*the reversal is nearly universal as over 90 percent of countries registered a decline in their HDI score in either 2020 or 2021 and more than 40 percent declined in both years, signalling that the crisis is still deepening for many*”. Given the time lags involved in the analysis and drafting that underpins the report, and the worsening impact of the food, energy and inflation crises since, we may be on course for *losing a quarter century of human development progress by 2025*.

The report addresses inequalities while integrating other important themes related to uncertainties in the *Anthropocene*: societal-level transformations, mental health impacts, and massive political polarisation. It explores uncertainty and opportunity, and the underlying factors that cause such volatility whilst emphasising that *robust advancing of human development* is the best way to optimise human outcomes and a more prosperous future for all⁴³. It reveals a new “*uncertainty complex*” never before seen in human history.

⁴¹ *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity*, UNDP, New York, 2022 [<https://hs.hdr.undp.org/pdf/srhs2022.pdf>]

⁴² *Human Development Report 2021/2022*, UNDP, New York, 2022 [https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf]

⁴³ We may feel somewhat reassured in that, given that WHO estimates for the pandemic toll have tripled to over 15 million worldwide (based not just on reported deaths of up to almost 7 million, but also “excess deaths”) and global life expectancy at birth fell for a second year in 2022 because of COVID-19, a drop estimated to be about an average 1.5 years (in the USA, 3 years have been lost), nonetheless the latest data indicate a marginal recovery is underway due to various factors including vaccinations.

For 2021, Switzerland gained top place. Rank-wise, over three decades, the best top performer has generally been Ireland, which climbed from 17th place thirty years ago to 2nd place in 2020, with some GDP caveats⁴⁴. Japan fell from 1st place to 19th during this time. The USA nudged up only 2 places from 19th to 17th in 30 years, now dropped to 21st in 2021, while the UK actually fell from 10th place to 18th, now ahead of the USA (Brexit notwithstanding). Canada slipped from 5th to 15th place. The USSR broke up, but Russia has fallen from 37th in 1993 to 52nd place, 30 years later. Ukraine has dropped to 77th. China fell from 65th place to 85th by 2020, lately risen to 79th. This is a paradox, as China's HDI was 0.499 in 1990, and rose consistently to 0.768 by 2021. But these are comparative rankings, and this just means that other countries did better in their progression. Yet demographically, there can be no doubt that China's advance has lifted the greatest cohort of humanity (about 800 million) to a substantially improved level of human development, all a consequence of globalisation. Hong Kong, with special status, remains at 4th, despite Beijing's clamp-downs on its democracy.

Looming reversals

So, since the beginning of the HDR back in 1990, and adjusted for methodological changes on a couple of occasions, the total global human development performance rose from 0.601 in 1990 to 0.737 for 2020, before its recent decline to 0.732 for 2021 i.e. back to the level in 2016. One should add that the data refers normally to the year prior, so we are dealing with data from 1989 through 2021, the HDR being published in the following year. These were observations already brought out before the latest and major Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. That war, and its global ramifications in migration, trade, finance, energy, and food security, have gone in *exactly the opposite direction*, thanks to the myopic leadership in the Kremlin, which can best be described as rhetorically indulgent and mendacious. Putin's "*State of the Union*" presidential address to the Russian Federal Assembly on 21 February 2023 was devoid of any new thinking, let alone constructive ideas or global inspiration, and represented a huge opportunity lost to engage in true statecraft⁴⁵.

The destruction of our planetary ecosystems continues and it is now predicted that climate change will become a main cause of death globally. The growing gaps in inequality between countries are paralleled by those within them too. Hence, the time has come to redefine what constitutes human progress, and to design a development approach that protects nature and our biosphere and reduces the progression in institutional, economic and societal stresses. Building on best practice, e.g. through decades of UN development system experience, policies that enhance social protection, empowerment and solidarity alongside one another, will help nurture a greater sense of social inclusion based on the idea of common human security. But again, it must be repeated, just in the last two years studied up to 2021 (and the outlook for 2022/3 is even more concerning) *we have already fallen back to the position in 2016, seven years behind, but are heading for a quarter-century decline, if not worse, by 2025. We must arrest this decline or we will see civilisation disintegrate.*

⁴⁴ Growth in the European Union (EU) will hit 0.8 per cent this year, according to the European Commission (EC). With an estimated 5% GDP growth in 2023, Ireland may contribute to preventing the Eurozone from falling into recession. That GDP is distorted by multinationals, and the corporate tax rate will rise from 12.5 to 15% in 2023. [<https://www.independent.ie/news/environment/despite-having-second-highest-gdp-ireland-ranks-below-eu-neighbours-on-environmental-issues-and-economy-heres-why-42351467.html>]

⁴⁵ Putin, Vladimir V. *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly*, Gostiny Dvor, Moscow, 21 February 2023 [<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>]

I.4. Indices of freedom and democracy

Human Freedom and Democracy

According to the personal, civic and economic *Human Freedom Index*⁴⁶, produced by the CATO Institute and the Fraser Institute, Switzerland remains in 1st place, New Zealand in 2nd, Estonia rose to 3rd, Denmark dropped to 4th, Ireland remains at 5th, Sweden rose to 6th, Australia dropped to 11th shared with Norway which rose a bit, Canada dropped 6 to 13th. Japan remains at 15th, and Germany at 18th. The UK dropped a good bit to 20th and the USA dropped 7 to 23rd. Ironically, prior to the crackdown by China, Hong Kong was once in 3rd place but has now dropped to 34th. Austria fell to 22nd, behind Belgium. Italy rose to 26th, then fell to 33rd, above a flagging France that dropped further to 42nd, below Botswana, Montenegro and Moldova. Hungary slid to 67th and Serbia fell to 69th. Ukraine rose 9 to 89th, way above Russia which languishes at 119th, below Mali and Uganda. Turkey rose 10 to 130th, just above Azerbaijan which slid behind by 5 to 131st. In the past few years, China dropped even more from 129th to 152th place. The HFI report points out that: *“In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, most areas of human freedom fell, including in the rule of law; freedom of movement, expression, association, assembly, and trade”*.

The EIU’s *Democracy Index 2022* is equally telling: the average global index stagnated in 2022. *“Despite expectations of a rebound after the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions, the score was almost unchanged, at 5.29 (on a 0-10 scale), compared with 5.28 in 2021. The positive effect of the restoration of individual freedoms was cancelled out by negative developments globally. The scores of more than half of the countries measured by the index either stagnated or declined. Western Europe was a positive outlier, being the only region whose score returned to pre-pandemic levels”*. The report rates five categories: electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties⁴⁷.

It again addresses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and details the *negative impact on democracy and freedom around the globe, due to the withdrawal of civil liberties on a massive scale* and fuelling an existing trend of intolerance and censorship of dissenting opinion, registering the worst global score since the index was introduced in 2006. The report demonstrates that under half (45.7%, down 0.4% on 2021) of the world’s population now live in a democracy of some sort, a significant decline. Of these, only 8% live in a full democracy, down almost 1% since the USA was downgraded from a *“full democracy”* to a *“flawed democracy”* in 2016. But over a third (39.9%) live in autocracies, mainly China and Russia.

As for Russia, which the EIU notes had been on a long slide from democracy under Putin’s rule, the report reveals that its invasion of Ukraine was accompanied by all-out repression and censorship, leading to *the sharpest decline in score of any country in the world in 2022 and earning many of the features of a dictatorship*. In contrast, Chile, France and Spain re-joined the top ranks. Russia has a very low score for *“functioning of*

⁴⁶ *The Human Freedom Index 2022*, published by the CATO Institute (USA) and the Fraser Institute (Canada), 2022 [Digital ISBN: 978-1-952223-78-5]. The HFI is the most comprehensive freedom index so far created for a globally meaningful set of countries and jurisdictions representing 98.1 percent of the world’s population.

⁴⁷ *Democracy Index 2022, Frontline democracy and the battle for Ukraine*, Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd, London, 2022. [<https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022>]

government” and “*electoral pluralism*”, but China is worse, rock bottom on civil liberties, yet it has shown some sensitivity to mass protests, e.g. on the zero-Covid policy. Nonetheless, with a GDP growth rate three times higher than the USA since 1990, China flaunts itself as a superior political system to the liberal democratic model, all the while “*ignoring the origins of the pandemic in Wuhan in Hubei province and the failure of their authorities to warn the world of the unfolding disaster*” as reported in the 2021 report.

As for other ratings, Norway, continues to rank in 1st place, followed by New Zealand, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Switzerland. Ireland sits at 8th. followed by the Netherlands, Uruguay, Taiwan, Canada, and Luxembourg. Germany rose to 14th, followed by Australia, Japan, and Costa Rica and the UK remains at 18th place to which it had fallen, followed by Chile, Austria, Mauritius, France, Spain and South Korea, as full democracies. Israel fell by 6 to 29th just above the USA which dropped 4 to 30th place, continuing as one of the “*flawed democracies*”.

An unfortunate number of other EU countries remain as flawed democracies, such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Estonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Malta, Italy, Belgium, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania. Serbia with weak political culture has fallen 5 places to 68th, behind Guyana, Mongolia, and Albania. In a lower category of “*hybrid regimes*”, Ukraine fell by one spot to 87th. But Russia and China are in the bottom category of “*authoritarian regimes*”, where Angola, Palestine, and Kuwait rank best of a bad lot at 109-111th places. Russia fell far below from 124 to sit at 146th place, below Guinea and Sudan. China fell 8 to tie with Tajikistan at 156th.

Composite freedom indices

There are other indices, such as the *Press Freedom Index* of Reporters without Borders, the *Freedom Index* produced by Freedom House, and the *Index of Economic Freedom* produced by the Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation. A *composite index* drawing on these three, and also on the EIU’s Democracy Index, identifies the *only one country in the world in recent years that consistently enjoys the top combined ranking for general freedom, economic freedom, press freedom, and democracy*: Ireland. It is followed in sequence places by Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland and Taiwan (China), who could all do better on press freedoms, and Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden who could all do better on economic freedoms⁴⁸. The UK has declined, and could do better on the economic side and viz press freedom, as could Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, and Uruguay. The USA needs to do same, but also address flaws in its democracy. But China (PRC) and Russia fare very badly in these, as authoritarian regimes, with Russia only marginally better than China. These ratings are of course comparative, and dynamic, relative to all others.

Overall long-term progress

Overall, there is some good “*globalisation*” news: the indicator of global human development had increased by 23.5% since 1990, from 0.597 to 0.737 to 2020. This was an extraordinary achievement over the longer term, even if it is now strained and marginally reduced to 0.732 for 2022 by the pandemic. There are many positive outcomes from globalisation but socio-economic grievances have so far been exploited politically by populism rather than being addressed coherently by governments.

⁴⁸ See table and sources online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_freedom_indices.

II. Managing convergence and risks

"Beyond the emotionalism and the obvious sense of relief on all sides, I think that there is a recognition that reality may intrude, that perhaps the steps ahead and the days ahead are going to be much more difficult than one expects."

- Hannan Ashrawi, on the October 1998 peace agreement⁴⁹

II.1. Global trends and general risks

Political fragility

To a worrisome extent, conventional political structures are increasingly proving inadequate to manage change, let alone rapidly accelerating change, before we factor in the pandemic, inflation and energy crises, or even the impact of the major new war in the heart of Europe. Too often they succumb to vested interests, lobbying, and state/regulatory capture. Representative democracy is at risk in several western countries⁵⁰. Some democracies risk failing with authoritarian leaders taking over, reducing freedoms, restraining civil society, and destroying media independence – trends all aggravated by restrictions of civil liberties and the increase in deployment of widespread surveillance technology⁵¹. Populist radicalism plays its part, but so too does dark money, obscure individual and corporate influence, and corruption. While consultative direct democracy flourishes, often citizen-initiated and boosted by social networks, it needs protection against vested interests and corporate lobbies⁵².

Existing political structures, at the global and national level, have a *deficit in leadership* and seem adrift, devoid of new statecraft. Degraded rhetoric and growing demonisation reflect a loss of ideals, amplified by social media and fake news leading to a tangible and dangerous decline in the politics of compromise and cooperation, not just nationally but globally. Brexit, Trumpism, Putinism, and the rising extremism of the far right, were and are symptoms of this, but not root causes. This bodes ill for future social and political stability and worse, makes increasing adversity inevitable and conflict almost unavoidable. The downstream effects of increasing inequality, resurgent nationalism and disruptive populism represent a challenge to the architecture of post-Westphalian sovereignty, and of the multilateral order since World War Two, but this cannot be addressed without a better understanding of the causes of rising inequality and trends in global values on the one hand, and mutating identities, including of multi-national conglomerates, on the other⁵³. We will deal first below with rising inequality.

⁴⁹ Comments by Hannah Ashrawi, Palestinian Parliament, upon signature of the 1998 peace agreement, between Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, summarised here: <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/Work/102698.html> [CNN report, 23 October 1998: http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9810/23/mideast.reax/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD]

⁵⁰ Taub, Amanda. *How Stable Are Democracies? 'Warning Signs Are Flashing Red'* [<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&r=0>].

⁵¹ Reporters without Borders. *World Press Freedom Index -2017* [<https://rsf.org/en/2017-world-press-freedom-index-tipping-point>].

⁵² Direct democracy is thriving - *Democracy doomsday prophets are missing this critical shift*, by Bruno Kaufman and Joe Matthews, published online in The Washington Post, 8 May, 2018 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/05/08/direct-democracy-is-thriving/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ed1ce6b237d8]

⁵³ The question of affording them international legal personality is very problematic, and the failure to adopt a globally binding code of corporate conduct has left corporate impunity “at large” in relation to labour

Economic stresses

Even before the pandemic, global income distribution continued to reflect massive distortions – growth had been unbalanced, everywhere. The richest 1% now own 48% of the world’s wealth, up 2% in the past year alone⁵⁴. And in the past two years they have gained more than US\$ 5 trillion in additional wealth – i.e. the richest one per cent are richer by \$4 trillion dollars in just one year. Already at \$4 trillion last year, it was about the same amount as the value of labour income lost by workers laid off as a result of the pandemic, according to the IPS in Washington⁵⁵. According to OXFAM, “*The world’s ten richest men more than doubled their fortunes from \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion—at a rate of \$15,000 per second or \$1.3 billion a day— during the first two years of a pandemic that has seen the incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall and over 160 million more people forced into poverty.*”⁵⁶ Oxfam has recommended a windfall profit tax on those global corporations who profited enormously from the COVID19 pandemic, not least to ease the food insecurity crisis aggravated by Russia’s war on Ukraine⁵⁷.

Employment & automation

Global labour income (before taking into account income supports) in 2020 was estimated by the ILO to have declined by 8.3 per cent, which amounted to US\$3.7 trillion (close to the IPS estimate), or 4.4 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). The ILO notes that labour income, fundamental to the livelihoods of some 3.3 billion workers around the world, has been falling as a share of total income, to close to 50%, being compared to income accruing to holders of capital⁵⁸. So, the capitalists’ collective wealth is equivalent to the collective income of 3.3 billion workers – that’s a stark contrast, and that 3.3 billion’s income has been a falling share of the total combined with capitalism’s.

On the basis of the economic growth forecasts, according to the ILO, we are facing a stagflationary episode, the first period of simultaneously high inflation and low growth since the 1970s⁵⁹. The ILO reports that “*the global jobs gap stood at 473 million people in 2022, corresponding to a jobs gap rate of 12.3 per cent. It consists of the 205 million unemployed – corresponding to an unemployment rate of 5.8 per cent – and 268 million people who have an unmet need for employment but are outside the labour force because they do not satisfy the criteria to be considered unemployed. This gap is particularly large for women*”. Global employment is projected to expand by 1 per cent in 2023, down from 2.3 per cent growth in 2022. This is a marked downward revision of 0.5 percentage points from the previous projection. “*No major improvement is projected for 2024, when employment growth is expected to have edged up to 1.1 per cent. The outlook is pessimistic for high-income countries, with close to zero employment growth*”.

standards, human rights, environmental stewardship, corporate ethics, and political influence, especially in countries whose GDP is dwarfed by multinational corporations’ wealth.

⁵⁴ Institute of Policy Studies, Washington DC [<https://inequality.org/facts/global-inequality/>]

⁵⁵ Institute of Policy Studies, Washington DC: [<https://inequality.org/facts/global-inequality/>] (2021)

⁵⁶ See:<https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/ten-richest-men-double-their-fortunes-pandemic-while-incomes-99-percent-humanity> .

⁵⁷ Harvey, Fiona. *Windfall Tax on Covid Profits could ease ‘Catastrophic’ Food Crisis, says Oxfam*, Passblue, 28 June 2022. [<https://www.passblue.com/2022/06/28/windfall-tax-on-covid-profits-could-ease-catastrophic-food-crisis-oxfam-says/>]

⁵⁸ *World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2020*, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2020 [ISBN 978-92-2-031408-1].

⁵⁹ *World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2023*, ILO, Geneva, 2023 [ISSN 2709-7080 (print); 2709-7099 (online)] [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_865332.pdf].

The long-term slowdown in productivity growth in advanced economies has spread to major emerging economies, affecting SMEs (small and medium enterprises), investment and pitching many livelihoods to the margins. Total hours worked globally in 2022 remained almost 2 per cent below their pre-pandemic level when adjusted for population growth, corresponding to a deficit of 52 million full-time equivalent jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week). Global unemployment is projected to rise to 208 million in 2023, surpassing its 2019 level by some 22 million, a substantial deterioration⁶⁰.

One of the most depressing aspects is that the poorest countries have the lowest COVID vaccination coverage, and hence also the lowest levels of ability for return-to-work – a vicious circle of self-generating impoverishment which brings starkly home the gross vaccine inequity of failed pandemic policies, and the greed of “*Big Pharma*”.

According to the ILO, labour markets around the world were disrupted in 2020 on a historically unprecedented scale⁶¹. Global employment losses for 2020 amounted to 114 million jobs relative to 2019. But working-hour losses in 2020 were approximately four times greater than during the Great Recession⁶² (i.e. the global financial crisis in 2008) and 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost relative to the fourth quarter of 2019, equivalent to a much larger figure of 255 million full-time jobs. The ILO also estimates 2 billion people are now in precarious employment, in the informal sector. Furthermore almost 24 % of young adults are not in education, training, or employment, and half of all workers only earn 8% of global labour income. In response, the ILO will promote a *Global Coalition for Social Justice* in 2023, and advocate strong commitment to the UN *Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions*.

Basic income

Perhaps a universal *basic income* may also help, as more countries are beginning to realize, and the pandemic income subsidies introduced in many countries last year may point in this direction⁶³. A basic income for all citizens is an idea that has variously had the support of Nobel Prize economists such as James Buchanan, Milton Friedman, Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, and James Tobin. Pilot experience in Finland indicates benefits include improved psycho-social and material well-being, reduced bureaucracy and more effective social programmes. It was also a proposal of Italy’s *Five Star Movement*, but it morphed into the conditional “*citizens income*” adopted by the Conte government in January 2019 – yet it has been credited with reducing poverty by million people. In the USA, the Alaskan Permanent Fund disburses to all residents of that state.

⁶⁰ *World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2022*, ILO, Geneva, 2022 [ISBN 978-92-2-035697-5] [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_834081.pdf].

⁶¹ ILO Monitor: *COVID-19 and the world of work*. 7th edition, 25 January 2021 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf].

⁶² The International Monetary Fund (IMF) considers the financial market crisis that ran from December 2007 through June 2009 was the most severe financial and economic crisis since the *Great Depression* of 1929-1939, hence the term the *Great Recession*, although others call it the *Great Deflation*.

⁶³ See *Basic Income: an answer to problems in social security*, a paper by Marjukka Turunen, presented to the 34th Plenary Meeting of the InterAction Council held in Dublin on 29-31 May, 2017. Canada is also charting a way forward; see *The Canadian Experience with Guaranteed Annual Income*, by Sara Rooke, presented at the same event.

However, it may become a *placebo* disguising underlying problems of demographic decline, job insecurity, and rising unemployment and the changing nature of work in an era of increasing artificial intelligence, robotics and automation⁶⁴. On the other hand, the projected slowdown in economic growth and employment which the ILO estimates will not recover from the pandemic before 2025, is therefore likely to force workers to accept jobs of worse quality than otherwise. In such cases, a basic income could influence that otherwise unattractive jobs' pay and working conditions be improved in order to further incentivise potential workers already receiving a basic income, as it would increase the willingness to work. Issues of equity and social justice will also play into considerations of policy-makers.

Before the pandemic struck, a huge surge in growth was also experienced by the poorest (up to 25% for the poorest 10%), and even more for others in the bottom half, bulging up to 72% at the middle, mainly in Asian economies especially China. However, by mid-decade already, the *weakest increases were in the lower middle classes of the industrialised and developed countries*, being 5-10% mostly, while in Germany the real income of the poorest 50% grew only 0-7%, and in the USA, by slightly over 20%. In Japan, the poorest 10% saw their real income decline⁶⁵. Social inequality was already rising in tandem with increasing polarization, and deterioration in the quality and courtesy of political discourse – even before the Trump presidency.

Social media

There are other things happening however, that provide ground for hope for further positive change. Social media have begun to provide alternative space for diversity, but we will touch on other problems posed, shortly, such as the fact that Twitter and Facebook/Meta until too recently amplified fake news more than truth. Meanwhile, the young generation have two well-founded fears, namely that their *digital footprint will become a future liability* for their careers, and that social media need to offer more diversity and not nurture the echo-chamber or silo effect of reinforcing preferences until they become prejudices⁶⁶. They need a right to delete their profiles, and have aspects “*forgotten*”, and to the *ownership over their preferences and digital footprint*, so that they can better manage their digital identity and record. But they – and all of us – also need that social media offer an alternative algorithm, *an icon for diversity*, that kicks in if they want to step outside the echo-chamber, and interact more effectively with the real world, and not just the circle of self-absorption of their existing avatars⁶⁷.

Better-managed, *social media can become an instrument of personal and community self-determination*, if identity can be protected, and as much as people wish to evolve it, as with gender and cultural appropriation, and as many experiment with avatars and alter-egos in cyberspace. Again, caution is advised as Jaron Lanier, the pioneer of virtual reality, has warned about the dangers of “*digital Maoism*” and “*online collectivism*”.

⁶⁴ Bregman, Rutger. *The Future of Work, Robotization, and Capitalism's Ability to Generate Useless Jobs*, an article published online by Evonomics.com (2017). According to an Oxford study cited, no less than 47% of all American jobs, and 54% of Europe's are at high risk of elimination by automation in the next 20 years. Bregman supports introduction of a *universal basic income*.

⁶⁵ *Human Development Report 2016, op. cit.*, (pp.76-77).

⁶⁶ Major recruitment agencies and global corporations are increasingly using algorithms to profile the preferences, attitudes, risks and competencies of prospective employees and not leave recruitment to CVs, interviews and one-off tests.

⁶⁷ These concerns were expressed by Irish youth leaders addressing the InterAction Council 34th annual plenary meeting in Dublin on 30-31 May 2017.

Privacy & surveillance

As for online collectives, one of the most notable if not notorious is *Anonymous*. Ostensibly an amorphous movement spurred by “lulz” but also concerns about curtailment of rights and the battle to preserve privacy and freedom, it has exposed the *troubling extent of surveillance, covert and often illegal*, by different states as a means of social control and in extreme cases of stifling dissent. From Assange to Snowden, and multiple others, criminal charges have been brought, extraditions sought, and some sentenced and/or fined for breaches of the law, including state secrecy. Offshoots include the so-called Personal Democracy Forum, Riseup, and Plan C. In some cases the hacktivism involved has spurred new legislation to better protect privacy in democracies, as when the US congress demanded reform of the National Security Agency with a bill in 2014 “*to prohibit warrantless access to Americans emails and banning intelligence agencies from installing back doors in commercial hardware*”⁶⁸.

The danger for human rights and civil society from unbridled surveillance, regardless post-9/11 “*security justifications*”, lies in the fact that that when we know we are pervasively and systematically watched and recorded everywhere, we alter our behaviour and censor our own freedom of expression, in effect *stifling our own ability to express dissent or critique* of “official” policies and actions by governments. Freedom of association suffers, and even collegiality at the work-place is diminished. In the America itself, Coleman observes that “*the sanctioned channels for political change in the United States are frighteningly narrow*”.

The responses to Anonymous’ “*dumps*” of sensitive data, and to various acts of hacking, differs markedly across the Atlantic, between the USA and the EU, where penalties are more lenient and where the EU Commission has in any case taken stronger measures to protect privacy, such as the *General Data Protection Regulation*, a directive on data protection and privacy in the EU and the European Economic Area, that is an important component of EU privacy law and of human rights law, in particular Article 8 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the European Union.

The extent of the spread of uncertainty in the world, and the disabling of democracy has already been touched on above in the treatment of *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene*⁶⁹, launched in February 2022, and in the *Human Development Report 2021/2022* and in the deterioration in the various freedom and democracy indices. For many, the more political initiatives of Anonymous afford an element of hope in the *protection or advancement of more open societies, by disrupting tendencies to social control or indeed outright autocracy*. Ironically given the mixed record of legality, its impact has also been credited with countering the cynicism that “*can disable political change*”, thus acting as a countervailing force against “*further entrenching atomization, preventing social solidarity, and sharply limiting political possibilities*”.

Surveillance capitalism

Even bigger as a looming risk is what Shoshana Zuboff terms “*surveillance capitalism*”, feeding off “*behavioural surplus*” and showing how our minds are mined for data, being radically altered in the process, and leading to enormous concentrations of power engaged

⁶⁸ Coleman, Gabriella. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy – The Many Faces of Anonymous*, Verso (an imprint of New Left Books), London & New York, 2014 [ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-583-9].

⁶⁹ *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity*, UNDP, New York, 2022 [<https://hs.hdr.undp.org/pdf/srhs2022.pdf>]

in social engineering *without any democratic accountability*, and with major risks for human integrity and social peace⁷⁰. As she puts it, “*surveillance capitalists know too much to qualify for freedom*”. They have scraped our lives and know us better than we know ourselves. But there is no true reciprocity in their dealings with us. Rather, *radical indifference* results from their enjoyment of *their* unregulated totalising freedom and knowledge. The allergy to legal restraints let alone regulation, hearkening back to Adam Smith’s “*invisible hand*” and the Friedman-Hayek promotion of *neo-liberalism*, has enabled the accumulation of unbridled “*instrumentarian power*”, where the digital giants harvest the individual cumulative data of everyone doing everything everywhere on the planet, but then engineer that trove towards maximising capital, power and influence on politics in their own sole unaccountable and obscure interest.

But their freedom becomes our subjugation, as these capitalists abandon the “*reciprocities*” that enabled a social contract between capital and labour to progress human well-being and fortify democracy. Surveillance capitalism becomes therefore parasitic and drives to “*hyperscale*” where a very small but highly-educated human workforce (ever smaller due to robotics and AI) generates enormous profitability through its capital-intensive digital infrastructure. Amazon’s new cashier-less shops in London are a prime example. The minutely-tracked performance exploitation of remaining labour thrives in the absence of fair labour practices, trades unions, and collective bargaining. The 20th century decline of the pre-Tesla/Musk conventional auto industry in the USA, e.g. GM, is contrasted with the German experience this new century where labour formally shares in corporate decision-making. In this regard, stakeholder capitalism may offer new hope⁷¹.

This is not yet obvious where surveillance capitalism is concerned, as the structural independence from labour fosters exclusion and lays the ground for radical indifference, a “*fundamentally asocial mode of knowledge*” as Zuboff calls it. She considers it to be a profoundly anti-democratic force that perverts egalitarianism as it treats all others as “*equally insignificant*”. Equivalence wins over equality, and information corruption, fake news, have not been seen to be problematic as long as the click metrics’ harvest rises. Hence content moderation has not been a priority for these digital giants, despite public or parliamentary suspicions and investigations into the enabling or fomenting of hatred, and the distortion of electoral democracy in many countries. Zuboff contrasts the professional journalist, striving for truth over falsehood, to the phenomenon of *radical indifference*, and notes that the rejection of equivalence defines journalism’s *raison d’être*. The pressure is on now, after the Trumpian election and its disruptive term, Brexit upheavals, and increasing digital surveillance in democracies as well as autocracies.

The Russian war on Ukraine has also contributed to a greater emphasis on ferreting out fake news and propaganda from truth, as a vital stratagem for defending the West and democracy from the threat of totalitarian advance. But it is too early to relax the pressure for change and accountability, not least given the murky links between surveillance technology corporations and intelligence services, whether Chinese, Russian, or “*Five*

⁷⁰ Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism – The Fight for the Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Profile Books Ltd., London, 2019 [ISBN: 978-1-78125-684-8]

⁷¹ Whittaker, Martin. *Companies are following the public’s agenda, not politics – and it’s paying off*, Fortune, 8 February 2023 [<https://fortune.com/2023/02/08/companies-esg-following-public-agenda-not-politics-paying-off-jobs/>]

*Eyes*⁷². Rather than succumb to the cynical manipulation of our lives, our freedom, and our social interactions, and ensuing alienation, by this new digital *instrumentarian* power which claims its own private sovereignty, we must regulate its scope and behaviour democratically and ensure its accountability to the public interest, whilst limiting the abnormal accumulation of capital, as Piketty calls for⁷³.

Digital divide, equity & resilience

For these reasons, we must ensure that digital capitalism serves the common good, and is used as a force for inclusion rather than exclusion. Its considerable assets and data harvesting could for instance also be a formidable resource for the United Nations in its collective intelligence and foresight, upholding human rights, advancing the SDGs, and ensuring greater awareness of the scope of human potential and the best practices of social achievements⁷⁴. Deploying and using the enormous data-harvests and analysis can also help prevent or mitigate conflict and enable the engagements and dialogue that promote durable solutions. Some of these concerns are taken up in the *Resilience Agenda* arising from the collaboration between the World Economic Forum and McKinsey, and where it has been estimated that the cost of failure to build resilience is between 1 and 5 percent of annual global gross domestic product (GDP) that translates into trillions of dollars⁷⁵.

Even more so with the pandemic, the Digital Divide has grown acutely between those who can study, earn, work, and trade online, and those who cannot, sharply dividing not only the advanced countries from the less-developed, but also within those advanced countries those who are IT-literate and those who are not. Indeed there is growing awareness of a “*second digital divide*” among young people, based on gender, migration and social-background gaps in digital reading. The largest part of digital reading gaps is due to differences in print-reading skills. As a result, inequality in digital reading depends on students’ development of standard competencies not digital ones⁷⁶.

But there are bigger issues looming beyond the disparities in digital access and competencies. Our neural pathways are being re-routed by the Internet, which feeds rapid, disjoint sampling of bits of information, to commercially optimise our consumption – but *weakening our capacity to analyse, reflect, contemplate, and intuit*. By filling our brains with myriad “information” (that we think are “thoughts”) in an incessant flow of browsing, we overwhelm our ability to actually *think*. We juggle, delete, discard, digress, and store, confusing our memories and *disabling our cogency*. We allow ourselves and our minds to be instrumentalised at the expense of our own creative agency.

⁷² *Five Eyes* refers to the SIGINT cooperation alliance between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, dating from 1941, and the multilateral UKUSA Agreement, a treaty for joint cooperation in signals intelligence, now shifting focus to the internet and orbital domains.

⁷³ Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, and London, 2014 [ISBN: 978-0-674-97985-7].

⁷⁴ Glenn, Jerome. *The United Nations is Increasing its Foresight Capacity*, Human Futures, December 2021 [[https://issuu.com/wfsf.president/docs/final2 - human futures magazine december 2021/s/14399484](https://issuu.com/wfsf.president/docs/final2_-_human_futures_magazine_december_2021/s/14399484)]

⁷⁵ Brende, Bjørg and Sternfels, Bob. *Seizing the momentum to build resilience for a future of sustainable inclusive growth*, McKinsey & Co. January 2023 [<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/risk-and-resilience/our-insights/seizing-the-momentum-to-build-resilience-for-a-future-of-sustainable-inclusive-growth>]

⁷⁶ UNESCO: [<https://en.unesco.org/icted/content/investigating-second-digital-divide-across-european-countries-social-disparities-digital>]

With books, we made our own associations, analogies and inferences while often meditating, ignoring other stimuli, when immersed in deep reading. We moved beyond the communal scriptorium or monastic school towards private minds, personalised learning, and interactive responsibility. But the switch from the page to the screen engages us in *a new ecosystem of intellectual influence*, where textual literacy may not even matter as visual and auditory stimuli replace active reading. But even in those instances of onscreen text, the experience is subordinated to multiple sensory addictions where spontaneity often overrules concentration, and our attention is persistently scattered.

The Net has therefore become the most powerful mind-altering technology ever since Gutenberg's printing press, but on the plus side, we now have instant access to a global wealth of information that digital access and search engines have democratised, and global communication capabilities have enabled the emergence of *global communities in every realm of human interaction*⁷⁷.

But is there a downside risk even to this? The answer lies in *how we understand our intrinsic worth as human beings*. As the computer, and even more so, AI, come to predominate in our lives, our calculative capabilities and even our memory will be increasingly "*outsourced*" to this new technology. But we are also embodied beings, where emotion, feeling, sensitivity, empathy, compassion and indeed love form a vital part of the completeness that renders us not just human but *humane*, and hopefully *wise*. We cannot therefore delegate these faculties and wisdom itself to machines or even some future android AI. To do so would abrogate responsibility and conscience, and reduce our capacity to be humane. In fact it would increase our alienation, and reduce our autonomy to a level of servility.

As Carr points out in his study of what the internet is doing to our brains, we need "time out" from this technology, time with tranquillity in the world of nature. As he says "*according to attention restoration theory or ART, .. when people aren't bombarded by external stimuli, their brains can, in effect, relax..... The resulting state of contemplativeness strengthens their ability to control their mind*"⁷⁸.

Deep thinking, empathy and compassion require a *calm attentive mind*, which emerges from neural processes that are inherently slow. Carr ends by quoting Martin Heidegger's notion that meditative thinking is "*the very essence of our humanity*". As Scheier observed "*The fundamental problems are no longer about the technology, but about how to use the technology, and best manage the risks*"⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows – What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, published by W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010 [ISBN: 978-0-393-07222-8].

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, p.219.

⁷⁹ Schneier, Bruce. *Secrets & Lies – Digital Security in a Networked World*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. USA, 2000 [ISBN: 0-471-25311-1] (pp.397-398). Writing in 1999, Schneier observed: "*The real lesson of Y2K was the amount of ancient computer code out there: code that was updated for Y2K compliance rather than replaced. We're still stuck with mistakes made in analog cellular systems decades ago, and digital systems years ago. We're still stuck with an insecure Internet, and insecure password-protected systems. None of this has caused the downfall of civilization yet, and it is unlikely to. And neither will our digital security systems, if we focus on the processes instead of the technologies*".

Civic education & civil society

To this end, *civic education needs a radical transformation*, to ensure a vibrant civil society. The pioneering experience of the former Moscow School of Political Studies, established through the initiative of Elena Nemirovskaya and Yuri Senokosov in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, is instructive. Affected by the increasing authoritarianism of the Putin regime, it morphed into the *School of Civic Education*, eventually exiled due to the “*foreign agent*” smear, and re-established in London, but with an outreach that is increasingly spread across central and eastern Europe. As an effort to promote universal norms, human rights, rule of law, civic responsibility and active social engagement in Russia, it fostered a cadre of tens of thousands of alumni who today are the bedrock of future hopes of a democratic reform in Russia, as Anne Applebaum implies⁸⁰. But it failed to achieve a critical mass to prevent the sliding autocracy of Vladimir Putin, let alone provide an effective forum to protest and prevent Russia’s aggressions lately culminating in aggression against Ukraine. How could it? After all, the might of the unreformed KGB/FSB, and indeed the entire asset base of Russia has been hijacked so thoroughly by Putin and his ilk, that the SCE, let alone the other nascent or young institutions of democratic aspiration, stood no chance of a fair contest⁸¹.

But the story is not over, as the school is now going global online. With a worldwide faculty of eminent thinkers and experts and continuing support of the stronger democracies and advocacy-oriented foundations, it is now poised to become a major *instrument of critical thinking, education and civic engagement* across the wider world⁸². Yuri Senokosov’s tome on the school, rich in retrospective intellectual underpinnings of *The Enlightenment* and modern democracy, lays forth strong arguments for one global civilisation, from many cultures, to paraphrase the late Merab Mamardashvili⁸³. As he notes, “*freedom and democracy require courage and understanding of what civic consciousness means*”. We must create “*a world where human rights and liberties are paramount*”, and not only in Russian society, but in our whole fractured world.

While language has its importance as Senokosov shows, it is in the *quality, intent, and outreach of discourse* that we find our main challenge for effective dialogue. The digital age risks diverting us with new language, from the intrinsically human and humane means of expressing our values, feelings and reflections. The search for new norms of comfort in a world of globalised relativity needs to be mindful of the fundamental values that undergird our human dignity. But the global reach of our possibilities of communication today enables us to nourish the first really global civil society, borderless, suffused with a truly planetary consciousness and conscience. Can we begin to leave behind our different nations and their divisions, and speak today of a global, human, “*meta-nation*”? Are we ready to recognise our *civilisation as truly global and unique for the first time*, and *ipso facto*, worth preserving in its universalism? Can it be enjoyed in unison with the gamut of our fellow earthlings, rather than through their exploitation?

⁸⁰ Applebaum, Anne. *The Russian Empire Must Die - A better future requires Putin’s defeat—and the end to imperial aspirations*. The Atlantic, December 2022.

[<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/12/putin-russia-must-lose-ukraine-war-imperial-future/671891/>]. See also how alumni of the school now mobilise global protests against Putin’s war: [<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/26/world/europe/russia-diaspora-protests.html>] (New York Times)

⁸¹ See Karen Dawisha’s *Putin’s Kleptocracy – Who Owns Russia*, published by Simon & Shuster, New York, 2014 [ISBN: 978-1-4767-9519-5] for an indictment of the systemic corruption of the Putin régime.

⁸² For lists of its authors and articles, see the website, *Sapere Online*: [<https://sapere.online/>]

⁸³ Senokosov, Yuri. *In Search of Lost Universalism – On The School of Civic Education*, published by the School of Civic Education, London, 2021.

II.2. Global Security risks

Militarisation & arms race

The world's largest army is now China's with 2 million active military personnel (excluding reserves). India is in 2nd place with 1.4 million, the USA is in 3rd place with 1.3 million, which combined with NATO yields 3.3 million. Russia comes with about 890,000 (excluding reserves), and, despite its much smaller size and population (Russia has 100 million more people than Ukraine's 43 million), Ukraine has about 700,000 in active service. Turkey has slightly more, and has the 2nd largest army in NATO. But despite its military's smaller size, US military spending, authorised at US\$ 816.7 billion for 2023, exceeds the next 10 countries *combined* (China, India, UK, Russia, France, Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Australia)⁸⁴. In fact, the USA is said to have between 750 and 800 military bases (depending on definition) spread abroad across the globe – without any UN Security Council remit for such expansion. If security begins at home, then for America disarmament must begin abroad; ditto for China, Russia, and others in a changed context where new realities demand a new security order, globally.

According to Fonseca Pimentel, world military expenditures back in 1954 were US\$ 126 billion reaching 400 billion by 1977, and he noted that in the five years from 1973-1977, US\$1.5 trillion were spent, more than the combined gross national product of all developing countries considered as such in 1974 (104 countries with GNP of US\$ 1 trillion)⁸⁵. This was equivalent to one hundred times the value of all ODA, then estimated at US\$15 billion. What a difference by 2021 though, when world military expenditures exceeded US\$ 2 trillion for the first time, reaching US\$ 2.113 trillion. Five countries cumulatively accounted for 62 percent of the total, being China, India, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States⁸⁶. The total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) from all members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee for 2021 was US\$ 178.9 billion, representing 0.33% of their combined GNI, and only 8.4% of total global military expenditures.

Developing countries now number 152 in total, according to the IMF definition but since the end of the Cold War, this also includes most of the former “*second world*” socialist countries⁸⁷. These 152 countries now account for more than 85% of the total world population. The good news is that, massive though global military expenditures are, the cumulative GNP of the 152 developing countries today (c. US\$ 37.4 trillion), now exceeds that by a factor 17 times, yet our global priorities are all wrong: *the world invests ten times more in preparing for war than uplifting development of the poorest countries.*

However, we are now faced with an exacerbating arms race as a consequence of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and continuing defiance of six UN General Assembly resolutions, a judgment of the International Court of Justice, and indeed the recent indictment of President Vladimir Putin by the International Criminal Court.

⁸⁴ Garamone, Jim. *Biden signs National Defense Authorization Act into law*, US Department of Defense, Washington D.C. , December 23, 2022.

[<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3252968/biden-signs-national-defense-authorization-act-into-law/>]

⁸⁵ Fonseca Pimentel, A. *Democratic World Government and the United Nations*, Escopo Editoria, Brasília, 1979 (pp. 57-58).

⁸⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Stockholm, 25 April 2022

[<https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>].

⁸⁷ See: <https://www.worlddata.info/developing-countries.php>

In any event, global peace and disarmament are crucial for saving humanity. It is time to denounce the old Roman adage, *si vis pacem, para bellum*. Rather we must turn swords into ploughshares, missiles into windmills. This lesson must be urged on all. From a European perspective, our common prosperity in the EU owes more to the investment of resources in productive economic activity, rather than in military or defence expenditures.

The West

Outside of the UN itself, the Munich Security Conference is the world's leading forum for security policy. It is to politics, what the World Economic Forum's annual Davos event is to economics, trade, and investment. In 2021, it was addressed by US President Joe Biden, the first sitting US president to do so, in a special online event, "*Beyond Westlessness: Renewing Transatlantic Cooperation, Meeting Global Challenges*". Westlessness, according to MSC then-Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger of Germany, is the term used to describe "*the sense that the world, but also the West itself, was getting less Western, less rule-based, less value-oriented*". Many pinned their hopes for a renewed impetus on the advent and policies of the then-new American President Biden, who warned that we are at a crossroads between democracy and autocracy. But it is profoundly mistaken to describe universal values and global rules as merely "*western*". That merely feeds the cynicism of those who reject them on those grounds. Whilst they have some roots in western heritage, not least the Enlightenment, *the same values* can be found in multiple eastern religious or political traditions, and indeed in the global south. More importantly, they are by and large codified in international treaty law, and by now also in customary norms.

Before the pandemic induced greater instability, only a few years ago in a candid acknowledgement of the growing geopolitical dangers of a major world war, Germany's then-foreign minister, now president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 8 October 2016 voiced his concern that the tensions between Russia and the USA back over six years ago were more acute than during the Cold War⁸⁸. He observed the absence of clear red lines for both Russia and the USA, and the greater unpredictability of the world today, and urged *a renewal of dialogue* – and that was before Trump's one-term tenure in the White House injected even more unpredictability into world affairs, let alone before Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine.

And the media are so far more trusted in Europe, with less prominent "*filter bubbles*"⁸⁹. Some might agree with Simon Kuper that American problems – from massive inequalities, fake news, media distrust, to political dystopia - are just that, American, and not *per se* Western except that "*global opinion formers are clustered in the US*". But if the "West" no longer exists as Carl Bildt (former Swedish prime minister) has suggested⁹⁰, and as Wolfgang Ischinger has pointed out in the previous Munich Security Conference, if the West no longer exists, then Europe needs its own public sphere as Kuper argues, or the vision of a more integrated and self-reliant Europe that Merkel and

⁸⁸ Steinmeier, Frank-Walter. See his article "*Es ist gefährlicher als Kalter Krieg*" in Bild: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/dr-frank-walter-steinmeier/das-ist-gefaehrlicher-als-kalter-krieg-48190550.bild.html>

⁸⁹ Kuper, Simon. *Why there will never be a Trump in Europe – the US is a plutocracy to a degree that is unimaginable in Europe*, Financial Times, 29 June 2017.

⁹⁰ Bildt, Carl. *It's the end of the West as we know it*. The Washington Post, 15 November 2016 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/its-the-end-of-the-west-as-we-know-it/2016/11/15/9e3ce89a-ab54-11e6-977a-1030f822fc35_story.html?utm_term=.fe74a54e4e22]

Macron once dreamt-of. However, the unintended consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, forging greater EU, NATO and Euro-Atlantic unity, creates a different context now for Biden, and all EU Council and Commission leaders and especially some national ones: Macron, Scholz, Duda and Orban.

From rivalry to adversity

Already after the initial Russian invasion of 2014, the situation in Ukraine and the associated risks of superpower confrontation were more dangerous. As George Friedman pointed out at the time, and not least because the risks of an MAD (mutually-assured destruction) nuclear war over interests that are vital to both sides, the risks of direct and non-proxy conventional conflict between both already rose acutely⁹¹. Russian-American incidents in Syria (e.g. in Khasham in 2018) bore this out. A more robust and direct conventional engagement could of course then lead in a second stage to nuclear war, as Putin has already threatened, declaring that any threat to one of Russia's allies would invite a direct and immediate response, mirroring NATO's *Article 5*. Since the latest major invasion on 24 February 2022, we are now closer to that than ever before.

Top Russian and American political analysts already warned years ago that the situation was worse than at the height of the Cold War, prompting the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to plead on 10 October 2016 (two days after Steinmeier) for *a renewal of dialogue* and de-escalation⁹². There is no sign of such de-escalation at present, on the contrary. Indeed the Munich Security Conference of 2018 bore these concerns out highlighting the failure of statecraft that would result if the Paris climate change treaty or Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty were to unravel, given the rise of ultra-nationalism, illiberalism, and weakening of "*core principles of the international order*"⁹³.

Now Russia withdraws from the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (2010). Gorbachev's dream of total nuclear disarmament could not be further away. This is all going in the wrong direction. Evocatively, the *Doomsday Clock* progressed to two minutes to midnight, five years ago, at its worst position since 1953, mainly due to the failure of global leaders to adequately address the growing risks of nuclear war and climate change⁹⁴. In January 2022, it moved forward another 20 seconds to be 100 seconds to midnight, as the Russian posturing menace to Ukraine deteriorated further – and that was before the 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia⁹⁵. Things have only gotten worse since, and we stand now at 90 seconds⁹⁶. And Russia must now pay heavy war reparations, through its currency reserves seized abroad, towards Ukraine's reconstruction, possibly in the form of insurance⁹⁷.

⁹¹ Friedman, George. *Germany warns of the danger of war*: [<https://geopoliticalfutures.com/germany-warns-of-the-danger-of-war/>]

⁹² *Russia, US move past Cold War to unpredictable confrontation*: a CNN article [<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/12/politics/us-russia-tensions-cold-war/index.html>].

⁹³ Munich Security Conference. *Munich Security Report 2018 – to the Brink and Back?* with foreword by Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman.

⁹⁴ The *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* brought it to two minutes to midnight in January 2018, signaling dramatic concern, calling for wiser leadership to pay attention to facts, and halt growing distrust of science.

⁹⁵ *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 7 March 2022 [https://thebulletin.org/2022/03/bulletin-science-and-security-board-condemns-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-doomsday-clock-stays-at-100-seconds-to-midnight/?utm_source=ClockPage&utm_medium=Web&utm_campaign=DoomsdayClockMarchStatement]

⁹⁶ *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 24 January 2023 [<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>]

⁹⁷ Aslund, Anders & Kubilius, Andrius. *Reconstruction, Reform, and EU Accession for Ukraine*, Frivärld – Stockholm Free World Forum, 2023 [ISBN: 978-91-988500-0-0]. Hundreds of billions of US\$ involved.

It is time to renew the call in the InterAction Council’s *Hiroshima Declaration* of 2010 to pursue and *complete nuclear disarmament* with newfound urgency⁹⁸.

We have also witnessed a serious deterioration of free trade conditions, and the reality of trade wars now being fought, including through measures such as the increasingly severe sanctions against Russia and its allies, and divestment by Western companies from its market. Trump’s administration imposed tariffs of US\$ 300 billion on Chinese goods, and Biden has kept them in place while restricting sales of technology to China, causing disruption of supply chains in China, which drives up US prices⁹⁹. These are some of the factors contributing to a global trade war with a damaging emergence of “*Protectionism 2.0*”, with Trumpian barriers to steel and automotive trade, or the digital economy and innovation-intensive industries. Even so, US trade with China reached record levels in 2022 defying predictions¹⁰⁰. Can we hope for a reset “*International Cooperation 2.0*”, as Ngaire Woods hints?¹⁰¹ Whither multilateralism?

III. Diverging visions, values, incomes and wealth

“*True moderation in the defence of political liberties is indeed a difficult thing: pretending to want fair shares for all, every man raises himself by depressing his neighbour; our anxiety to avoid oppression leads us to practice it ourselves; the injustice we repel, we visit in turn upon others, as if there were no choice except either to do it or to suffer it.*”

— Livy (c. 59 B.C. – 17 A.D.) in *Ab Urbe Condita*¹⁰²

III.1. Diverging Visions

Already, by 1988, the USSR’s twilight had come. Gorbachev’s *Glasnost* opened debate and *Perestroika* called for reform of the system, essentially through self-government and adoption of what the EU would later call *subsidiarity*¹⁰³. In fact to an extent, the EU today models some of the reforms that Gorbachev sought for the Soviet Union, in terms of democratic practice.

⁹⁸ *The Hiroshima Declaration – a plea for zero nuclear weapons*, InterAction Council, 28th annual plenary meeting, 19 April 2010 [<https://www.interactioncouncil.org/publications/hiroshima-declaration-plea-zero-nuclear-weapons>]

⁹⁹ Sachs, Jeffrey D. on CNN: [<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/12/opinions/the-bad-news-about-economy-sachs/index.html>]

¹⁰⁰ Liu, Juliana. CNN: *US-China trade defies talk of decoupling to hit record high in 2022*, 8 February 2023 [<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/08/economy/us-china-trade-record-hnk-intl/index.html>]

¹⁰¹ Woods, Ngaire. *International Cooperation 2.0*, an article published online in *Project Syndicate*, on 20 February 2018: [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/global-cooperation-after-america-first-by-ngaire-woods-2018-02>]. At the time, she indicated that multilateralism remained strong, as countries worked around an America whose influence was collapsing under Trump’s administration.

¹⁰² Livy (Titus Livius). *Ab Urbe Condita* (The History of Rome), Books I-V (early era, pre-763 B.C. to 293 B.C.); this quote is from his treatment of the year 466 B.C. “*Continuance of Party Strife*”, in Book III – *The Patricians at Bay*, page 257 in *The Early History of Rome*, Books I-V (translated by Aubrey de Séincourt; introduction by R. M. Ogilvie), Penguin Classics, England, UK, 1960 (1st ed.); re-printed 1986 [ISBN: 0-14-044104-2].

¹⁰³ Gorbachev, Mikhail. *Perestroika – New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, published by Novosti Press, and Fontana/William Collins Sons & Co., London, 1988 [ISBN: 0-00-637356-9] (p.281 “*On democratizing Soviet society and reforming the political system*”).

Sadly, Putin's Russia today does not, neither in terms of its re-centralization, reversal of democratic reforms, restriction of civic and media freedoms, nor the nuclear threats in the Kremlin's periodic menaces – and now his egregious norm-defying and genocidal war against Ukraine. Nothing could be further from the efforts of Gorbachev to promote trust and eliminate nuclear weapons altogether¹⁰⁴.

Whatever about the dissolution of the USSR, and the re-birth of many other CIS nations, Gorbachev will stand tall in history as an almost unique leader of a once-great superpower in trying to remove the doomsday threats to mankind and foster peaceful sustainability. That his popularity later plummeted at home is not unique for politicians who buck the trend, a courage that led others to their death by assassination, a fate that befell Michael Collins, John F. Kennedy, Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin and Zoran Djindjic. But if Russia today appeared until recently to have recovered somewhat its global standing in *human development terms*, this is only in terms of that composite index of *longevity at birth, education, and per capita income*. But what about freedom, democracy, and indeed the rule of law?¹⁰⁵ It is too obvious that these are now severely repressed or flouted in Russia – but how are they faring around the world? Not so well.

Russia's imperial instability and appeasement

When Russia dominated the USSR, which in turn dominated much of the world, Russians did not constitute a majority of the USSR, no more than Germans would in today's EU. Even back in 1897, 60% of the subjects of the Russian Empire were not Russian. Lenin himself said "*Czarist Russia and the Russians constituted 43 per cent of the total population, i.e. a minority, while the non-Russian nationalities constituted 57 per cent*". Even the Soviet census of 1951 revealed that of 202 millions, 54 percent were non-Russian (later denied by Beria). Back in 1964, Dobriansky pointed out very specifically the "*statistical tricks in padding figures for political purposes as, for example, counting a person as Russian because he knows the Russian language*". He also pointed out that the most productive lands were in non-Russian homelands, such as Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia, adding that "*both Russian institutional totalitarianism and Russian imperialism have been fiercely resisted by the non-Russian nations in the USSR*"¹⁰⁶. Dobriansky also recalled how Krushchev, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU has admitted that "*Stalin had attempted to kill off 40 million Ukrainians and had failed*". For those who still think that Russia and Ukraine are brotherly nations, perhaps the parable of Cain and Able tells it best. On December 1, 1991, 92% of Ukrainian voters backed its Declaration of Independence, including *majorities in every single region of the country*. It was to prove the final nail in the coffin of the Soviet empire.

The dissolution of the USSR followed a week later through the Belovezha Accords of 8 December 1991, perceived by many as a liberation of many peoples from the Russian yoke¹⁰⁷. The Russian Federation succeeded to the USSR, including in the UN Security Council with a permanent seat and veto power and the other members of the Soviet Union

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, chapter 7, *Problems of Disarmament*, pp. 210-254

¹⁰⁵ Andrei Kovalev describes the downward slide in *Russia's Dead End – An Insiders Testimony, from Gorbachev to Putin*, Potomac Books (imprint of University of Nebraska Press), 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Dobriansky, Lev. *The Roots of Russia*, published, courtesy of the US Naval Institute Proceedings-April 1963, in *An Cosantoir* (The Defender), The Irish Defence Journal, Dublin in January 1964. Dobriansky (1918-2008) was Professor of Economics at Georgetown University, and a former US Ambassador.

¹⁰⁷ O'Donnell, Francis M. *Russia is less than its myths and the truth will set its peoples free*, Katoikos World, 26 January 2023 [<https://katoikos.world/analysis/russia-is-less-than-its-myths-and-the-truth-will-set-its-peoples-free.html>].

became “newly independent states” imperfectly grouped in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and admitted as new members of the UN, with exception for Belarus and Ukraine which were founder members.

For a while, in the early 1990s, Russian leaders toyed with democracy, while some peoples within the Russian Federation tried to secede. The Chechen revolt was violently suppressed with devastating effect in two wars as Russia reneged on Soviet commitments to its sovereignty and independence. During the mid 1990s, Russia’s slide from democracy accelerated, leading Zbigniew Brzezinski to observe in 1994 that “*It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire*”¹⁰⁸.

Today, it is the *passionarnost* and Eurasian ideology of Lev Gumilev, Ivan Ilyin, and the dangerous extremism of Alexander Dugin which seem to prevail in the Kremlin¹⁰⁹. Laying aside the absurdity, lately admitted by PMC Wagner’s Prigozhin, of Putin’s claims that Ukraine is ruled by Nazis, the Russian war against Ukraine can be seen as a naked neo-imperial aggression. But while Ukraine’s defence of its national sovereignty is inseparable from the task of building a democratic country, the perception of western inconsistency in applying universal principles in engagement with other countries, e.g. in the Middle East, Africa or the south generally, has bred cynicism, and notwithstanding several supportive resolutions for Ukraine in the UN General Assembly, several G77 countries are reluctant to take a stance or to join western sanctions against Russia. These doubting countries must be reminded of Russian double standards and duplicity as much as anyone else’s.

Gary Kasparov, in his book dedicated “*to the memory of Boris Nemtsov and every person in the world battling for freedom and democracy as he did every day*” noted that the West has squandered the peace dividend after the Iron Curtain fell, allowing “engagement” with dictators, *without leveraging reforms based on universal values*, and ostensibly enabling entrenchment as they acquired the economic and technical means to compete prosperously with the West, and thereby further resist reforms¹¹⁰. *Engagement* empowered these retrograde *nomenklatura* instead of empowering civil society in their repressed countries. Engagement became therefore, as Kasparov puts it, *appeasement* of autocrats in North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and in Africa and the Middle East.

In that regard, that aspect of “*globalisation*” also favoured China, Iran, and Russia, and enabled Putin to foist a false narrative of paranoid victimhood on the largest country in the world, leading to brutal war and genocide in the bleeding heart of Europe, Ukraine, a war of intended conquest, a new imperialism replete with its explicit genocidal goal to wipe out Ukraine and the distinct identity of its people. That is where Russia is today, alas. Its greatest domestic failure is repression of civil society and its activism in Russia.

Other authoritarian regimes have also learnt to use the internet and social media to monitor and suppress latent civic activism, using mass surveillance technologies as in each of these and many other countries, including flawed democracies such as the USA.

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, Brzezinski, page.80.

¹⁰⁹ Clover, Charles. *Lev Gumilev: passion, Putin and power*, published online by the Financial Times, London, 11 March 2016. Viz Wagner & such PMCs, see Pfanner/ICRC in bibliography below, p.101.

¹¹⁰ Kasparov, Gary. *Winter is Coming –Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World must be Stopped* (w/Meg Greengard), Atlantic Books, London, 2015 [ISBN: 978-1-78239-786-1].

Appeasement or global governance

The globalisation of appeasement therefore undermined the struggle for human rights, fundamental freedoms, open societies, and democracy. Hence, as reported in the prior year for the Democracy Index, we continue to witness the “*normalisation of emergency powers, which have tended to stay on the statute books, and accustomed citizens to a huge extension of state power over large areas of public and personal life*”.

The repression of civil society in large parts of the world begs the question: has the dogma of Marxist *dialectical materialism* deluded leaders of modern-day China and Russia into a gross discomfort with freedom of expression precisely because they fear the clash of political opposition, and have not matured their political world-view to consider that *opposing social forces can be reconciled through engagement, mediation, compromise and dispute resolution*? Can they not move beyond zero-sum game theory to embrace the reality that liberated social forces release enormous energy that can be safely harnessed or channeled through common ground and shared values towards *win-win* successes for a greater good? Have the ostensible successes of multilateralism been so lost on them that they must retreat into arbitrary repression, mass surveillance and social control?

Even a hermit crab can outgrow its expropriated home. And a caterpillar must moult its confining skin as it grows through instar; in fact it cannot emerge as a soaring butterfly without a complete reorganisation of its internal being within the chrysalis. But the chrysalis of dogmatic ideology never matures.

In this regard, moving beyond state-centric or government-centered approaches to international relations, and the simplicity of functionalist and realist schools, can enable a governance approach that embraces multi-stakeholder interactive synergies to emerge and incubate a new multilateralism¹¹¹. In this, a shift from emphasis on state sovereignty towards the fulfilment of universal human rights, and inclusive participatory politics can lead not only to a redefinition of the role of government at multiple levels, but also to the reform of the UN architecture of *inter-national* organisation as such, to *meta-national*.

III.2. Diverging values

Fragmenting societies

On a wider normative scale, the *World Values Survey* (WVS) reveals growing divides: mass values are *not* converging¹¹². The Inglehart-Welzel *World Cultural Map* of the Survey shows us how *traditional values* contrast with *secular-rational* values and *survival* values contrast with *self-expression* values. The Survey shows that there is a *massive divergence in values between the advanced knowledge-based liberal countries and the more traditional and insecure societies where basic needs remain a struggle*.

Recently this divergence is *mirrored inside the advanced societies*, as brought out sharply by recent studies of the sociology of Trumpism and the huge electoral divide in the USA between the *urbanism, liberalism, education and prosperity of Democrats* and the *more-rural and traditional conservatism of Republicans*, themselves sharply divided between *plutocrats* and what might be provocatively called the “*stressed white proletariat*”.

¹¹¹ Beigbeder, Yves & Dijkzeul, Dennis (eds.). *Rethinking International Organizations – Pathology & Promise*, Beghahn Books, New York & Oxford, 2003 (pp. 14-15; 311-334) [ISBN: 1-57181-656-9].

¹¹² World Values Survey: *Findings and Insights* [<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>]

Ernesto Zedillo, former Mexican president and director of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, wrote an insightful article two years ago in *Noema* where he describes American and particularly Trump's, "vandalism" of the rules-based international order¹¹³. What an example for others, exploiting false precedents to deepen global harm.

Furthermore, norms of marriage, family, gender, are moving in the same direction in advanced industrial societies, *but not elsewhere*. Countries (or classes) that remain relatively economically stagnant show little value change, and this partly explains the appeal of *archeofuturism*, *identitarianism*, and Dugin's dogmas in an impoverished authoritarian Russia. There is a growing divergence in values between high-income and low-income countries, and between democracies and autocracies. Just like Putin's Russia today, Islamic societies strongly emphasize traditional values, but this changes with greater education, peaceful outreach, and democratic reform.

Emancipation and inclusion

Hence, the largest increase in *emancipative* individual agency comes with progressive personal economic security, and in the transition from industrial to knowledge societies. Where existential security is strongest, secular norms and self-expression are stronger. In that regard a *basic universal income* would be individually emancipative and socially transformative.

To the extent that we can encourage emancipative values to grow stronger in countries that are undemocratic, such as Belarus or North Korea, they can help trigger movements towards greater respect for human rights, and hopefully democracy. They change the nature of desire, and democracy appeals due to its empowering qualities. Democracy has to be seen therefore as *empowering*, and control by elites, or state capture, as inherently *disempowering*.

In the meantime, the increasing danger is that the role of the human individual is being called into question, not only by automation and artificial intelligence, dying ecosystems, and resource depletion, but by the erosion of human rights, meaningful work, social cohesion, and the de-construction of human personhood.

III.3. Media influence

Reporters or instigators

The role of the media as a factor, positive or negative, not just in *reporting* on socio-political tensions, post-Cold War conflicts and indeed failed states, but indeed in *influencing if not sparking* those firestorms, was hotly debated in the 1990s by the international media itself along with concerned governments and political, diplomatic, military and humanitarian actors¹¹⁴. Gowing considered that the media role was in fact quite limited, contrary to the hate propaganda role of the local radio "*Mille Collines*" in inciting the Rwandan genocide¹¹⁵. In his view, American involvement in Somalia and

¹¹³ *Rebuilding a Multilateral World after Trump*, by Ernesto Zedillo, published in *Noema*, November 19, 2020 [<https://macmillan.yale.edu/news/rebuilding-multilateral-world-after-trump>]

¹¹⁴ Minear, Larry. *The New Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action*. (with Colin Scott and Thomas G. Weiss), Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., Boulder & London, 1996 [ISBN: 1-55587-676-5].

¹¹⁵ Gowing, Nick. *Media Coverage – Help or Hindrance in Conflict Prevention?* A report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York, September 1997.

later in bringing about the *Dayton Accords* in Bosnia-Herzegovina was more due to political analysis and shifts in US positions on its national interests than to any media portrayal of moral quandaries and human suffering. Supposed *sovereigntist* diplomacy overrode any international media outrage at wars in Chechnya, leading to international indifference. In that regard, media influence was considered largely impotent, as with Burundi in 1996. Other instances of actual media influence, e.g. in securing the UN Security Council's endorsement for the establishing of "safe areas" in Bosnia in 1993, backfired when it proved a bad precedent as Srebrenica fell atrociously in 1995.

In general, a contrast must be drawn between the roles of *independent* international media, and *local* media outlets that serve as instruments of regime propaganda or insurgency, where the scope for insidious if not genocidal influence is potentially catastrophic¹¹⁶.

Media capture, concentration and spin

Almost twenty years ago, when the author of this paper was living in New York, he would often sense that the American public was being fed a diet of echo-chamber stories and perspectives on the outside world by the dominant US media. The spin seemed usually to succour a sense of American *supremacism*: they were the best country, had the best politics and institutions, built the best society, and had the winning economy. Those pesky Europeans – whom they had to rescue *not once but twice* from their own-induced world wars, without yet even *doing so again* for Ukraine – would never get their act together: the EU and its currency, the Euro, were "doomed to failure".

For that matter anything that went well in the rest of the world, was US-inspired or influenced, or if chaotic, was due to the failures of others, perhaps even that useless group of talking heads, the United Nations. In contrast, this author would revel in the diversity of alternative news that European media brought out: *Euronews*, *Le Monde*, *The Guardian*, *Il Tempo*, *The Irish Times*, *La Tribune de Genève*, etc., especially when visiting back home across the Pond (the Atlantic). This was before the explosion of "fake news", the alt-right diatribes against the mainstream media (MSM), and the later Trumpian erosion of America's reputation, influence, and credibility, and other examples of "archeofuturism" and *identitarianism*¹¹⁷.

Then around 2000, this author came upon a programme on the American public broadcasting system PBS that pointed out the *exclusionary and collusive practices of the mainstream media* in the fields of TV, radio, and print in the US market. Basically, if you were a small entrepreneur, and wanted to open up a local channel or paper, you would approach local advertisers only to discover that increasingly, they were beholden through exclusive contracts to the MSM.

Less competition means less democracy

Competition was therefore cut-out and prevented. Few worried deeply at the time about this, as such concern seemed antithetical to the philosophy of free markets and fair

¹¹⁶ See also: *Professionalism in War Reporting – A Correspondent's View*, by Tom Gjelten, a report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York, 1998. Gjelten argued for a new approach, emphasizing moral responsibility.

¹¹⁷ Faye, Guillaume. *Archeofuturism – European Visions of the Post-Catastrophic Age*, Arktos Media Ltd., UK, 2010 [ISBN: 978-1-907166-09-9], a far-right tract that influenced Jean-Marie Le Pen. Faye's *Eurosiberianism* has an ideological resonance with Alexander Dugin's *Eurasianism*, so influential on the ICC-indicted Russian President Vladimir Putin and his neo-imperialist wars on his neighbours.

competition, and worse, would mean that audiences were being fed a diet of selective stories that ultimately would pervert politics and undermine democracy.

This author discussed the problem of media perversion with the former director-general of UNESCO, Spanish politician Federico Mayor Zaragoza, and he shared the same concern, worried that Silvio Berlusconi, the highly controversial Italian oligarch who not only dominated Italy's media but became prime minister, had just bought out about half of Spain's media through his *Mediaset*. Already his 90% controlling influence over Italian media had led to Italy being downgraded by Freedom House in 2004, a criticism rejoined by the International Federation of Journalists, and Reporters without Borders. The chilling effect on competition in Italy was even the object of a violation ruling by the European Court of Justice¹¹⁸.

And this was a time before the emergence of social media, and the phenomenon of data harvesting that led to *Cambridge Analytica* and its questionable roles in the Brexit and Trump campaigns, let alone Israel's *Team Jorge*, or Prigozhin's Russian trolling *Internet Research Agency*.

Over two decades later, America, once vaunted as the standard-bearer of democracy in the world, as mentioned earlier, is now considered a “*flawed democracy*” – even before Trump's election – according to the EIU's Democracy Index. On a maximum scale of 10, it fell from 8.05 in 2005 to 7.98 in 2016, and 7.85 for 2022. A score of at least 8.00 is required to be a “*full democracy*”. Since then, it is considered a flawed democracy. The principal cause for its decline is *deterioration in public trust of its institutions and media*. It fell to 21st place globally in the 2017 Democracy Index¹¹⁹, but is now down at 30th place in the 2022 index¹²⁰.

As a concerned observer, this author has mentioned these concerns, usually tangentially, in conferences of current and former world leaders at the annual Global Baku Forum, and at the InterAction Council plenary meeting on 30-31 May 2017 in Dublin, as well as in seminars under the auspices of the Association of Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe¹²¹.

There is now a growing but piecemeal awareness of many analysts of the need for policy counter-measures required to preserve media markets as largely free and fair in the public interest as distinct from particular corporate benefit, and to recognize and protect the positive synergies between open democracies and open economies, whilst ensuring diverse and independent media with the highest standards of integrity in investigative professional journalism.

¹¹⁸ Pavli, Darian. *Berlusconi's chilling effect on Italian media*, in *Voices*, Open Society, 29 March 2010 [<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/berlusconi-s-chilling-effect-italian-media>]

¹¹⁹ *Democracy Index 2017 – Free Speech under attack*, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 2018 (page 5). In contrast, Norway was in 1st place, Ireland in 6th place with Canada, the UK in 14th place, Ukraine is in 83rd place, Russia in 135th place, just above Zimbabwe.

¹²⁰ *Democracy Index 2022 - Frontline democracy and the battle for Ukraine*, Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd, London, 2022. [<https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022>] for 2022, Norway remains in 1st place, but all the following slid downward: Ireland in 8th, Canada in 12th, the UK in 18th, Israel is one spot above the USA, *ironically given its occupation record in the Palestinian territories*. Serbia slid 5 places to 68th, Ukraine slid to 87th, and Russia fell hugely 22 places in a year to 146th just above Venezuela, its sister autocracy. China fell 8 places last year to 156th shared with Tajikistan.

¹²¹ InterAction Council - *Final Communiqué*, 2017 [<http://interactioncouncil.org/final-communiqu-53>].

III.4. Rising inequality and corporate apathy

Morbid inequality

Concerns about rising inequality have been raised by writers such as Thomas Piketty in his book on capital¹²². Whilst some have debated the accuracy of his analysis – after all, isn't the world much more prosperous now than decades ago, and people on average much better off? - the extent of massive and growing inequality in America and its plutocratic nature is also brought out in OECD data. The extreme if not obscene growing wealth of the super-rich Ultra High Net Worth Individuals (UHNWIs) is also described as *fostering morbid inequality*¹²³. The new rent-seeking mercantile ideology of “*disruption*” is actually a dangerous subversion of economic stability, taking “*shock therapy*” to a new level¹²⁴.

On inequality, the *Gini* coefficient, after taxes and transfers, is 0.375 in the USA, higher than anywhere in Europe (except Bulgaria), with the UK close behind (0.355), according to the OECD¹²⁵. As Simon Kuper argued poor Europeans fare better than their American equivalents, and enjoyed a pre-pandemic life expectancy of 81 years average in the EU, compared to 79 in the USA¹²⁶.

Labour disempowerment and automation

In this regard, the decline in unionization and the *erosion of collective bargaining* had already significantly increased inequality, and also contributed to the decline in working conditions, occupational safety, health care and retirement benefits in the USA¹²⁷. The erosion of these benefits also spills over to affect non-union workers.

From a social perspective, market concentration and distortion accelerates automation and displacement of labour. Per unit of output, large global conglomerates are more given to converting to robotics, automation, and artificial intelligence than small start-ups or SMEs. They diminish employment, and also limit innovation. That reduces a government's tax intake, as robots don't pay taxes, but workers do.

The expected exponential impact of emerging artificial intelligence and accelerating automation, combined with algorithmically-driven rapid capital movements have also become major factors of uncertainty, and social anxiety. As many of 40% of jobs could be automated with current technology by 2030, according to PwC¹²⁸. Poorly-managed migration and integration, and the sense of cultural loss and eroding identity also

¹²² Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, published by The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, and London, 2014 [ISBN: 978-0-674-97985-7].

¹²³ Buchheit, Paul. *Morbid Inequality: Now Just Five Men Have as Much Wealth as Half the World's Population* [<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/06/12/now-just-five-men-own-almost-much-wealth-half-worlds-population>]

¹²⁴ Klein, Naomi. *Now let's fight back against the politics of fear- Political shocks, security shocks, climate shocks – however unstable the world seems now, things could get a lot worse. But we can unite for a better future* [https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/10/naomi-klein-now-fight-back-against-politics-fear-shock-doctrine-trump?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Facebook]

¹²⁵ *Income inequality*, OECD, Paris, 2023 [<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>]

¹²⁶ *Op. cit.*

¹²⁷ *Worker voice in a time of rising inequality*, a Presidential Issue Brief, by the US President's Council of Economic Advisors, Washington D.C., October 2015 (Obama Administration; 10p; see page 5).

¹²⁸ Cutter, Chip (editor at LinkedIn). *Warren Buffett says AI will lead to fewer jobs, warning future could be 'enormously disruptive'*, published online in LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/warren-buffett-predicts-significantly-less-employment-chip-cutter>

undergird the resurgence of *nativism, ultra-nationalism and populism*, finding acute expression in the Brexit dilemma¹²⁹. In Britain in particular, much of this is an 80-year old predicament: misguided government policies dating back to the 1930s, when King Edward VIII exposed it - the probable real reason for his abdication on 1936, the deprived areas of Britain that he visited then being those where the Brexit vote was strongest¹³⁰.

There is some degree of correlation between strong Brexit-voting areas of the 2016 referendum, and the “*depressed areas*” of Britain between WW1 and WW2. The EU was used as the bogeyman with all the adversarial jargon that the Brexiteers could muster, however the truth is that successive British governments for almost a century *failed to reverse post-industrial decline*, regardless their political colours. In sharp contrast, various Irish governments have used FDI and EU regional funds to develop the country more uniformly and inclusively, such that today, the GDP per capita of the Republic of Ireland is more than twice that of the UK’s neglected province of Northern Ireland, notwithstanding the politically stabilizing effect of the *Good Friday Agreement*.

Precarity, alienation, and demography

According to the International Labour Organization, before the pandemic, while the global unemployment rate was stabilizing, unemployment and decent work deficits stayed at persistently high levels in many parts of the world¹³¹. The decline of the middle classes in the developed countries, combined with faltering reforms and reversals in ex-socialist states and the growing scale of precarious employment or outright redundancy, already lay at the heart of the alienation from politics and institutions in those countries, especially amongst the young who often account for much higher unemployment rates – and even more so now due to COVID impacts.

Nonetheless, before the pandemic, demographic aging and particular talent shortages in several growth sectors were already prompting some companies and countries to retain older workers and delay retirement and to increase female participation in the labour force (e.g. only c. 45% of women in Japan work) and to tap the diaspora, as China, India, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey and Ireland do quite effectively¹³².

¹²⁹ O’Donnell, Francis M. *Parturition beyond Partition*, an article on Brexit from an Irish perspective, published online in Academia.edu on 2 April 2017 and presented to the 34th Annual Plenary Meeting of the InterAction Council in Dublin, May 2017.

¹³⁰ See *Life Magazine*, 14 December 1936, just days after the abdication of King Edward VIII. His abdication was not just a matter of his marriage to American divorcee Wallis Simpson, but his “*interference*” in government by virtue of his championing the need to redress grievances in the *depressed areas* (defunct collieries) such as South Wales, Cumberland and Tyneside.

¹³¹ *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018*, published by the International Labour Organization, Geneva, 22 January 2018 [ISBN: 978-9221315-353]. The global number of unemployed already exceeded 192 million persons back in 2017. The long-term global economic outlook was already modest despite strong pre-pandemic performance of labour markets in developed countries, Almost 1.4 billion workers were estimated to be in vulnerable employment in 2017. In developing countries, vulnerable employment affects three out of four workers although the World Bank estimated before the pandemic that vulnerable employment as a share of total employment has been on a thirty year historic decline as economies developed and labour conditions improved.

[http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2018/WCMS_615594/lang--en/index.htm]

¹³² The Irish diaspora exceptionally numbers 70 million, a figure much larger than the resident populations of France, Spain, or the UK, due mainly to the influence of mass emigration since the Great Famine of the 1840s before which Ireland had a population of 8 million.

Notwithstanding France's efforts to raise the retirement age, it remains to be seen to what extent post-pandemic recovery will take fundamentally different directions in work practices, norms, and corporate office usage. It can be expected that national greening policies on energy efficiency factors, as much as online productivity evolution, will induce major changes.

In this connection the recent report commissioned by the *Club of Rome* indicating that the “*long-feared population bomb may not go off*” and the world population may peak at 8.8 billion sooner than previously expected (previously estimated at 9.7 billion) and then fall fairly quickly, augurs well for the environment, and could be hastened if governments raise average income and education levels, thereby also easing socio-political stresses¹³³. However, the growing prevalence of PFAS “*forever chemicals*” in humans, reducing fertility, could have even more serious demographic consequences, unless the production of such chemicals is halted sooner¹³⁴. Some types of PFAS chemicals can take up to a thousand years to degrade. Technologies to accelerate their decay are being developed.

Leadership apathy

The lack of adequate self-awareness and shallowness of corporate “community” in capitalism undermine personal integrity and corrode character¹³⁵. Richard Sennett described the apathy of corporate CEOs in the Davos elite, faced with the erosion of dignity brought about by the precarious and demeaning nature of increasingly “*flexible employment*”. Joe Stiglitz echoed this dismay but in sharper terms “*in a world where greed is always good*”, denouncing their mercantilism and their inability to recognize the pain which globalisation-induced dislocations have brought to millions; trickle-down economics doesn't work, and they just don't get it, comforted blindly in their luxury and too busy celebrating a return to growth coupled with massive tax cuts by Trump¹³⁶.

Having himself participated in the Philanthropy Forum at the World Economic Forum in Davos in February 2009, this writer shares his disillusion at the utter lack of imagination and initiative that CEOs and world political leaders there evinced in their passivity and seeming *indifference* towards the emerging severity of the recession at that time.

¹³³ Watts, Jonathan. *World 'Population Bomb' may never go off as feared, finds study*, The Guardian, 27 March 2023 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/27/world-population-bomb-may-never-go-off-as-feared-finds-study>]

¹³⁴ Carrington, Damian. *'Forever chemicals' linked to infertility in women, study shows*, The Guardian, [<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/apr/06/forever-chemicals-infertility-women-pfas-blood>] 6 April 2023. PFAS chemicals (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), invented to prevent stains and sticking, are now found widely in textiles, clothing, rainwear, non-stick cookware, take-away foods, popcorn bags, and cosmetics, and multiple other consumer products, such as toilet paper - an even in 'treated' wastewater and sewage. They have infiltrated soil and water worldwide and are very slow to breakdown in the environment. They are increasingly linked to infertility, and cancers and liver, kidney and thyroid diseases. They are being progressively banned.

¹³⁵ Sennett, Richard. *The Corrosion of Character – The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1998, pp.136-148 [ISBN: 0-393-04678-8].

¹³⁶ Stiglitz, Joseph E. *Post-Davos Depression*, published online by Project Syndicate, 1 February 2018: [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/davos-ceos-tax-cuts-trump-by-joseph-e--stiglitz-2018-02>] . See also his book *Globalization and its Discontents*, published by W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 2002 [ISBN: 0-393-05124-2]. He calls for humanising globalisation, and reform of the Bretton Woods and other global institutions.

IV. Emancipating diversity by de-concentrating power

“Women have advanced a lot and today there are many taking up frontline positions in the defence of indigenous rights”

- Joenia ‘Wapixana’, Brazil’s Congress¹³⁷

IV.1. Concentration of apex power

Extreme personal and corporate wealth

The ten richest people in the world are all men, and collectively own US\$1,301 billion¹³⁸, more than the entire US military budget, which itself is more than the next 10 countries combined. These 10 billionaires own more than the GDP of these countries individually: Brazil, Australia, Spain, Mexico, Indonesia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or Poland¹³⁹.

In the corporate world, in the past couple of years, Apple has displaced oil-rich Saudi Aramco, as the top company, followed by Microsoft, Alphabet (the Google parent company), Amazon, Tesla and Berkshire Hathaway which displaced Meta/Facebook as the most valuable listed companies worldwide on market capitalisation¹⁴⁰. Of the top fifteen, only 3 are not “American”, namely Saudi Aramco, and Taiwan Semiconductor, followed by China’s Tencent in 15th place. Walmart tops with revenue stream, followed by Amazon¹⁴¹, and has a workforce size of 2.3 million. But Walmart’s workforce is also marginally higher than the size of the world’s largest army: China with 2 million active military personnel (excluding reserves), followed by India and the USA.

With surging profits, Amazon accounts for a 8% of global digital advertising revenue in 2021, and was already a third of all online purchasing in the USA in 2020, and together with Google and Facebook/Meta accounted for two-thirds of digital advertising revenue there in 2020¹⁴². Their control of data gives them enormous power and requires vigorous *trust-busting* as happened to Standard Oil almost a century ago. Cambridge Analytica, which notoriously used Big Data harvesting to better target the Brexit and Trump wins in 2016, worked to sow discord and discontent, to feed the *negatives*. Instead, we need to go beyond the World Values and other surveys to additionally harvest the Big Data of the Big 5 internet giants to build a better world, affirming *positive inclusive values*, and combating hatred and exclusion.

¹³⁷ Wapixana, Joenia (whose legal name is Joenia Batista de Carvalho), as quoted in *Breaking from tradition, indigenous women lead fight for land rights in Brazil* by Anthony Boadle, Reuters, 29 April 2019 [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-indigenous-women-idUSKCN1S51W6>]. A member of the Wapixana tribe of northern Brazil, she took their name, and brought their land dispute to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, became the first indigenous lawyer to argue before the Supreme Court of Brazil, earned the UN Human Rights Prize in 2018, and is the first indigenous woman elected to Brazil’s Congress.

¹³⁸ Forbes Live Billionaires List (2023): <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>

¹³⁹ IPS analysis of Forbes’ Live Billionaires List and World Bank.

¹⁴⁰ The 100 largest companies in the world by market capitalization in 2022

[<https://www.statista.com/statistics/263264/top-companies-in-the-world-by-market-capitalization/>]

¹⁴¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_companies_by_revenue]

¹⁴² [<https://www.businessinsider.com/google-facebook-amazon-were-biggest-ad-revenue-winners-this-year-2020-12>]. See also: *The world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil but data – the data economy demands a new approach to antitrust rules*, a leader article published by The Economist, London, 6 May 2017: [<https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21721656-data-economy-demands-new-approach-antitrust-rules-worlds-most-valuable-resource>].

State capture and civic disempowerment

Such extreme concentrations of wealth, combined with data monopoly and media control, inevitably lead to state and regulatory capture by vested corporate interests, and sometime by single megalomaniac personalities at their top. Overall, this represents a growing threat to democracy and free speech worldwide, including in democratic and highly-developed countries. There are many reasons for this, but there is an increasing distrust of authority almost everywhere, along with a rise in intolerance, polarisation, corruption, and varying degrees of “*state capture*” by corporate and political elites. This is in tandem with increasing prevalence of social media, versus declines in investigative and independent professional journalism¹⁴³.

In this context, although billions have been lifted out of poverty, and great success has been registered with health and education development goals globally, this has been set back significantly by the COVID pandemic, and more recently by the global impact of Russian war in Ukraine, rampant inflation and aggravated food and energy security crises. Hence, inequality has grown enormously. Since 9/11, civil liberties were already in decline, security controls had increased, and human rights were in retreat.

The Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the trends dramatically. Militarisation has increased and a new arms race is on. Climate change and environmental dilapidation are becoming widespread, and time is running out. Most if not all of these challenges cannot be dealt with only nationally, but require robust international cooperation, and *substantial expansion of civic empowerment*.

Democracy or autocracy: post-Soviet struggles

Mikhail Minakov observes that Russia’s major aggression on Ukraine in February 2022, effectively ends the *post-Soviet* period, thereby now characterised *as inter-war* with that rupture¹⁴⁴. He proceeds to compare the experience with democracy and autocracy of four former Soviet states: *Estonia* (a stable democracy with strong Western influence), *Russia* (a short-lived democracy turned aggressive autocracy with competing external influences), *Ukraine* (an unstable democracy with competing external influences), and *Uzbekistan* (a stable autocracy with a minimum of diverse external influences). His study, comparing *democratic creativity* (drawing on individual freedom) and *autocratic creativity* (drawing on stable order), focusses on human agency and the variable failure “*to use that time to construct political and legal systems capable of settling human conflict (what Kant called “unsocial sociability”) and sustaining peaceful coexistence*”. The return of narrow nationalism undermined the faltering progress of democratisation, marketisation, and Europeanisation in those states that tended to autocracy. The quandary of the period reveals “*a tragic struggle of individuals and collectives to re-order their social worlds with an orientation to either freedom/liberty or subjection/allegiance*”. The result is “*the transformation of the post-Soviet region into a region of wars that supports the demand for military-style leadership and disciplined society*”.

¹⁴³ For a treatment of how dangerous irresponsible journalism has been in and contributing to aggravating wartime, see: Minear, Larry. *The News Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action* (with Thomas G. Weiss and Colin Scott), published by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., London & New York, 1996 [ISBN: 1-55587-676-5].

¹⁴⁴ Minakov, Mikhail. *Political Creativity and its Democratic and Autocratic Outcomes: The Case of the Post-Soviet Period 1989 – 2022*, Ideology and Politics Journal, Foundation for Good Politics, 2023 [ISSN: 2227-6068].

In analysing the period, Professor Minakov traces *patrimonialism* and *ideological* prevalence (rising sharpest in Russia), noting *shifts in the division of power* (central v. local, achieved in Estonia); *legislative constraints on the executive* (sharply declined in Russia; better in Ukraine); *the rule of law* (high in Estonia, very low in the other three, and declining in Russia); *judicial constraints on the executive* (very high and stable in Estonia; sharply declined in Russia, better but volatile in Ukraine); *electoral democracy* (best in Estonia, good but volatile in Ukraine, declining in Russia, very low in Uzbekistan); *parliamentary voter turn-out* (best in Estonia, declining in Ukraine, volatile in Russia); and *freedom of expression* (full in Estonia, good in Ukraine, sharply declining in Russia, very low but rising in Uzbekistan). *Per capita incomes* rose best in Estonia, followed by Russia – but mainly a result of its oil and gas exploitation. He observes that in general, post-Soviet *democratic creativity* has been linked to the gradual growth of the role of *civil society*, which has flourished in Estonia, is growing in Ukraine, and sharply declining in Russia. Although declining, homicides remain highest in Russia, where “*the strongest influence on autocratic creativity stemmed from war - or the threat thereof.*”

IV.2. Market concentration: power and predation

Geopolitical instability

There are undoubtedly deep tectonic shifts taking place in the global “balance” of power, whether we look at political power, military might, economic muscle, or corporate influence and the security challenges posed by various acts of unilateralism that undermine the global rule of law and norms for inter-state behaviour. But recent developments and debates have also brought out the challenges to democracy posed by populism, pandemic restrictions, and the underlying grievances of growing inequality, income disparities, migration, industrial decay and erosion of the middle class (in the West), and other grievances attributed to the “*downside*” aspects of unbridled globalisation and free trade. The time has also come to bridge these discussions on global geo-politics and global institutions with global economics and the structural risks emerging from massive systemic distortions, and from unsustainable growth policies. It is not only the global management or regulation of countries that we need to look at, but of corporations who wield increasingly enormous power, without any democratic accountability, and often act with social disregard and environmental impunity.

Weaponization of corporate power

Even worse is the case of global conglomerates that fall under the thumb of autocratic régimes. Examples are Gazprom in the energy field, or Huawei in mobile telephony, respectively enabling Russian and Chinese dominance and in some cases outright market or even political manipulation. The Chinese-Russian alliance has contributed, especially in the context of Russia’s devastating aggression against Ukraine, to a serious increase in global instability. Recent Western European, and in particular German, dependence on Russian oil and gas, has empowered Russia in its neo-imperial aggression, and weakened the effect of sanctions. Combined with the challenges of global pandemic recovery and tackling the imperatives of arresting climate change, the war could not have come at a worse time – never mind that there is never a “good” time. The stranglehold influence of fossil fuel economies such as oil-exporting states like Russia, can be mitigated by shifting away to renewables, as the EU is now driving toward.

In fact moving fast-forward on the promise of zero-emissions green hydrogen can not only remove the political dependence on fossil fuel autocracies, but also remove a major factor of carbon-based pollution, and play an important role in tackling climate change¹⁴⁵.

Global figures have also voiced concerns about systemic vulnerability to social media and rogue technology. George Soros wrote of the spectre of *social media as a threat to society*, lamenting the concentration of power in a few mostly-American companies¹⁴⁶. Highly critical of their monopoly power, using network power to glean rising marginal returns, he called them effectively *public utilities, albeit privately owned*, that use discriminatory pricing and engage in consumer/citizen manipulation. He raised the risk of their data-wealth being used by authoritarian regimes such as Russia, and China, to bring about totalitarian surveillance. He lamented their influence on rising inequality. He contrasted American and European approaches to competition and regulation, lauding EC Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager's efforts to prohibit and penalize monopoly power exercised by internet giants. He urged taxation and regulation. But can market diversity be reconciled with geo-strategic "*full-spectrum dominance*"? Ultimately, imperialist impulse is incompatible with freedom.

Guy Verhofstadt followed with an article highlighting the *weaponization of social media platforms*, especially by the Kremlin's Internet Research Agency, and demanded that social media companies be held accountable for content and influence.¹⁴⁷ Just days later another article appeared decrying the increasing autocracy in China, with its introduction of *omnipresent electronic surveillance and cyber-totalitarianism*¹⁴⁸. The extent that this could become Orwellian using technology for anticipatory interception and repression has also been brought out in other analysis¹⁴⁹. This also underscores the growing realization that the presumption that "*capitalism and democracy necessarily go hand-in-hand*" is a mere act of faith, but not universally proven. *Capitalism can empower autocracy* by creating wealth and enabling technology. State-controlled corporations, whether Chinese, Russian, or North Korean, can be docile instruments enjoying monopoly and state-protected positions - and enabling rogue power.

Market distortion

However, apart from the nefarious influence of autocratic regimes' globally-engaged monopolies, there is another – in our view, *very fundamental* – phenomenon which directly relates to all of this, and which is only beginning to be partially recognised, namely, the problem of "*market concentration*", i.e. the misuse of market power and the

¹⁴⁵ Baderschneider, Jean. *The Coming Green Hydrogen Revolution*, Project Syndicate, 22 June 2022: [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/green-hydrogen-revolution-energy-security-geopolitics-by-jean-baderschneider-2022-06>]

¹⁴⁶ Soros, George. *The Social Media Threat to Society and Security*, published online by Project Syndicate, 14 February 2018: [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/social-media-security-threat-by-george-soros-2018-02>].

¹⁴⁷ Verhofstadt, Guy. *Tech v. Democracy*, an article published online by Project Syndicate, 23 February 2018: [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/social-media-russian-interference-by-guy-verhofstadt-2018-02>].

¹⁴⁸ Simpson, Emily. *Globalization has Created a Chinese Monster*, published online in Foreign Policy, 26 February 2018: [<http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/26/globalization-has-created-a-chinese-monster/>].

¹⁴⁹ Mitchell, Anna and Diamond, Larry. *China's Surveillance State Should Scare Everyone*, published online in The Atlantic, Boston, 2 February 2018: [<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/china-surveillance/552203/>].

perversion of liberal market freedoms by a few, to the great detriment of the many¹⁵⁰. These lead to growing structural imbalances in global and regional markets and national and international power relations, which feed into economic, technological, and democratic distortions. In a nutshell, and very simplistically for the benefit of just making this point: *big fish eat small fish*, and soon there are none left. Without countervailing forces that act to preserve an ecosystem, this is as true in politics, as in biology. This is why, in the clash of empires of old, the need for an order of principles that balanced interests led to the Peace of Westphalia and the emergence of international law, the League of Nations, and later United Nations, and the corpus of norms and treaties that regulate international behaviour today – or should, superpower adventurism notwithstanding.

Privatisation and the public “commons”

But economics still remains ideological in this post-Cold War era once characterised by the sharp contrast of centrally-planned communism versus liberal capitalism. Following the collapse of the communist bloc in eastern Europe a generation ago, and under conditions of pervasive neo-liberal de-regulation of markets, free trade and globalisation have greatly expanded, with a surge of privatization, foreign investment, and mergers and acquisitions (M&As) half of which occurred in the USA, involving firms with bigger market shares and a third of which exceeded US\$10 billion, whilst the global total dropped with Covid suppressing much deal-making, to US\$2.8 trillion in 2020, from \$3.4T in 2019 (it was \$4.92T in 2007 before the recession, and \$4.8T in 2015).

Many M&A deals were struck in the oil and gas sector in an effort to consolidate, to weather reduced demand and prices. In contrast, tech and online financial services grew and demand remained robust¹⁵¹. Amazon’s recent activities have raised some concerns, as have Google, Facebook/Meta, and Monsanto¹⁵². The previous extent of M&A activity, whilst sometimes heralded as an indicator of growth, had also raised concerns about predatory take-overs¹⁵³. Joe Stiglitz wrote succinctly on the problem of high monopoly profits, rightly challenging Schumpeter’s market ideology¹⁵⁴. In fact, these problems had been foreseen a long time back, but were ignored by policy-makers and governments¹⁵⁵.

Even the “commons”, or public goods are now being privatized, to the detriment of public well-being in terms of access and cost. Public divestments for reasons of better efficiency and one-off divestment revenue boosts to public treasuries, have increasingly led to asset-stripping and deprivation of public access (e.g. to urban parks) with increasing user-costs to the public, a form of indirect taxation that over the medium-term wipes out the public benefit of short-term divestment revenue, even assuming that such privatization is transparent and incorrupt which too often it is not.

¹⁵⁰ Measuring market concentration, the *Herfindahl-Hirschman Index* (HHI), used by antitrust authorities, is calculated by squaring the market share of each competing firm in the industry—expressed as either fractions, decimals, or whole numbers—and then summing the resulting numbers.

¹⁵¹ [<https://www.investopedia.com/2020-mergers-and-acquisitions-a-year-in-review-5093751>]

¹⁵² *America’s Amazon Problem* [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/americas-amazon-problem_us_59443b5be4b06bb7d2731cba?ncid=inbInkushpmsg00000009]

¹⁵³ *EU M&A surges, but....* (<https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2017/0630/886697-global-m-a-activity/>)

¹⁵⁴ *Monopoly’s New Era* [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/high-monopoly-profits-persist-in-markets-by-joseph-e--stiglitz-2016-05>]

¹⁵⁵ Korten, David C. *When Corporations Rule the World*, co-published by Kumarian Press, Inc. and Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., West Hartford and San Francisco, 1995 [ISBN: 1-887208-00-3].

Dominance and plutocracy

Strong players have emerged and as they come to dominate markets, through mergers and acquisitions, global conglomerates take over, or stifle smaller players or start-ups, and conditions become oligopolistic or monopolistic. This is what one can call the “*downside*” of globalisation, for as much as globalisation brings many benefits, with promulgated charms such as greater competition, lower prices, and product/service diversity, there are diminishing returns over time, eroded by increasing homogeneity. Mergers and acquisitions lead to market dominance by a few, the stifling of competition, and the gradual erosion of diversity. Main Street everywhere becomes dominated by the same brands, and in that sense, less true diversity, narrower choice, and often rising prices, are the result.

Worse, global corporate hegemony benefits enormously from *network effects*, and can engage in exclusionary behaviour, unfair competition, collusion, price-fixing, tax-cheating, and worse, regulatory capture, or even state capture when their control of elites through patronage and lobbying becomes predominant. Under these conditions of economic distortion, politics in democracies becomes disrupted, and *less democratically-representative*. In fact, such market concentration can eventually become a threat to governance itself. Democracy is seen to be already at risk in several western countries almost a decade ago¹⁵⁶. Even freedom is receding around the globe¹⁵⁷.

Democracies are failing and authoritarian leaders are taking over, reducing freedoms, restraining civil society, and destroying media independence¹⁵⁸. The recent election results in Brazil hold hope that the new Lula government will rectify the Bolsonaro damage, much as in the USA the Biden administration tackles the negative and insurrectionist legacy of Trumpism.

Declining democracy

Before the pandemic’s aggravating impact, we seemed to be reaching a “tipping point” of democratic decline that augured ill for our future and could bring about an era of global tyranny on an unprecedented scale. But while analysts point to the authoritarian tendencies of leaders of government from China, Russia and Turkey to Hungary and Poland, let alone the recent decline in the USA, and now Israel, few draw the link to the *epidemic of state capture* by oligarchs and the *distortion of markets* by the global rise of their corporate juggernauts and their corrupting influences, significantly enabled by *unbridled market concentration*. Yet Transparency International has for some time been saying as much on the political risks, largely unheeded if not unheard. This is not to say that certain autocracies are not without ideological underpinnings, whether from Communism, Alt-Right Neo-Fascism, Archeo-Futurism, Identitarianism, Eur-Asianism, Islamism, or Neo-Zionism or the myriad other strongman cults.

¹⁵⁶ Taub, Amanda. *How Stable Are Democracies? ‘Warning Signs Are Flashing Red’*. See online: [<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&r=0>]

¹⁵⁷ Smith, Noah. *Freedom is receding around the world*. See also the indices for Democracy and Freedom mentioned earlier [<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-08/freedom-is-receding-around-the-world>].

¹⁵⁸ Reporters without Borders. *World Press Freedom Index -2017* [<https://rsf.org/en/2017-world-press-freedom-index-tipping-point>].

Globalisation has also enabled firms to use transfer-pricing and other means to minimize taxation and indeed to ultimately lobby for very preferential tax regimes as they have done easily with Trump. But governments become burdened with debt, and unable to finance services of aging populations. Conversely, promoting and enabling SMEs is a great way to stimulate employment expansion, product/service diversity, and innovation. And this is one lesson that post-COVID recovery must absorb to respond more robustly.

Enabling diversity through market regulation

The crucial imperative is to ensure better regulation of competition and markets, balancing incentives and penalties/surcharges to secure our ecosystem and biomes and the achievement of sustainable development goals. By this is meant, not obstructive, but enabling regulation: enabling free and fair competition, enabling small-scale (SME) start-up entrepreneurship and innovation, and enforcing anti-trust or anti-oligopoly legislation through robust enforcement agencies¹⁵⁹. The online petitioning network Avaaz has claimed success in calling giants such as Monsanto to account for unfair practices.

The European Commission for its part has taken on Google, Apple, and others¹⁶⁰. But the EU's *European Competition Network* is really only the sum of its 28 parts, and not more than that. Some of the national competition agencies are actually consumer rights agencies, and do not address the issues of market diversity and fairness. Some, concerned about network effects in the digital economy, have called for a new approach on this, and the creation of a *World Competition Network*, starting off with a possible G20 initiative¹⁶¹. This presumably would go beyond the ambit of the *International Competition Network* created in 2001 but which does not exercise any rule-making functions, yet is dedicated to competition law enforcement amongst its members across the world¹⁶². Meanwhile, the OECD has done some work on competition policy in the digital age¹⁶³, and the different ecosystems involved, for which it has produced a handbook¹⁶⁴.

Former US President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) produced several reports on this conundrum: for example in April 2016, one on *the benefits of competition*¹⁶⁵, another on *AI and automation* in December 2016¹⁶⁶. Shockingly, in most sectors, according to the CEA, standard metrics show large – and often enormous – increases in market concentration. This is not just true of internet giants and social media, but in varying and increasing degrees in main-stream media; telecommunications; energy; pharmaceuticals; health care; retail trade, distribution and transport; banking, finance and insurance; agro-industry; real estate and leasing; utilities; tourism; and consultancy

¹⁵⁹ *Capitalists are destroying capitalism. They must be stopped* [https://qz.com/978318/capitalists-are-destroying-capitalism-they-must-be-stopped/?utm_source=qzfb]

¹⁶⁰ RTE, Ireland: *The EU regulators impose record fine on Google* [<https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2017/0626/885689-eu/>]

¹⁶¹ Marin, Dalia. *Restoring Competition in the Digital Economy* [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/competition-in-the-digital-economy-by-dalia-marin-2017-05>]

¹⁶² ICN: [<https://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/about/>]

¹⁶³ OECD: [<https://www.oecd.org/daf/competition/competition-economics-of-digital-ecosystems.htm>]

¹⁶⁴ OECD: [<https://www.oecd.org/daf/competition-policy-in-the-digital-age/>]

¹⁶⁵ *Benefits of Competition and Indicators of Market Power* [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/page/files/20160414_cea_competition_issue_brief.pdf]

¹⁶⁶ *Artificial Intelligence, Automation, and the Economy* [<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/Artificial-Intelligence-Automation-Economy.PDF>]

services. In particular, *dominant firms engage in predatory behaviour, increasing rents, and reducing sectoral firm entry and labour market mobility*. As one writer put it:

Markets need to be viewed – by investors and regulators alike – as an ecosystem. The lesson from biology is that systems require feedback loops in order to regulate themselves. Some researchers have lighted on economic examples: countercyclical fiscal policy is one; the new “macroprudential” tools, such as capital requirements that vary over the course of the business cycle, is another..... Regulators [need] to think of these feedback loops – literally – systematically¹⁶⁷.

IV.3. Global corporate accountability and regulation

Corporate concentration and social responsibility

It is also time to develop a global convention settling the question of the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, and mandating an *obligatory code of conduct with the necessary mechanisms for independent review, enforcement, and regulation of competition*. A similar convention should tackle the issue of the transnational super-rich or Ultra-High Net Worth Individual billionaires. The power of corporate influence, lately amplified by digital media, has manifested itself crudely in electoral manipulation in recent years, as have rogues such as *Cambridge Analytica* and the Tal Hanan’s ‘*Team Jorge*’ from Israel¹⁶⁸. Corporate giants have also become oligarchies exploiting market concentration, dominating markets and stifling competition. Hence, market concentration by a few leads to misuse of market power and the perversion of liberal market freedoms, inducing structural imbalances in global markets and power relations, which feed into economic and democratic distortions¹⁶⁹.

Apart from the particular current and growing demands for regulation of digital giants, progress in establishing a general international regulatory framework for global conglomerates has been slow, notwithstanding the 1970 *Barcelona Traction Case*¹⁷⁰. The question of affording them international legal personality remains problematic, and the failure to adopt a globally binding code of corporate conduct has left global corporate impunity “*at large*” in relation to labor standards, human rights, environmental stewardship, corporate ethics, and political influence. Some sectors already benefit from global and/or national regulation, with aviation regulators, financial regulators, telecommunications regulators, consumer and even charity regulators.

¹⁶⁷ Coyle, Diane. *Economics in Transition - Since the 2008 global financial crisis, there has been no shortage of criticism of conventional economics, with its rigid models and fanciful “representative agents,” which utterly failed to predict the collapse. But the critics often overlook the emergence of new approaches – some predating the crisis – that could redefine the mainstream of economic thinking.* [https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/economics-in-transition-by-diane-coyle-2017-06?utm_source=Project+Syndicate+Newsletter&utm_campaign=9cf84b7a0c-op_newsletter_2017_6_23&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_73bad5b7d8-9cf84b7a0c-104280465]

¹⁶⁸ *Revealed: the hacking and meddling disinformation team meddling in elections*, The Guardian, London, 15 February 2023 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/15/revealed-disinformation-team-jorge-claim-meddling-elections-tal-hanan>]

¹⁶⁹ The measurement of *market concentration* is most important, influencing decisions by competition authorities whether to approve or not mergers and acquisition. The common measure is the *Herfindahl-Hirschman Index* (HHI) [<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Herfindahl-Hirschman-index>].

¹⁷⁰ International Court of Justice – *Barcelona Traction Case*, 1970 [<http://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/50>]

The UN *Global Compact's* corporate social responsibility advocacy tried to promote a uniform standard of conduct on a voluntary basis, but compliance is a marketing rather than legal concern¹⁷¹. This is no solution at all¹⁷². The OECD also has its *Corporate Governance Principles*, adopted by the G20 in 2015, but these are also non-binding¹⁷³. Growing market concentration demands a new approach, globally regulated. Corporate social responsibility *cannot be only voluntary – it must be mandatory and enforced*.

From shareholders to stakeholders

Apart from the mantra of “*going green*” in tackling climate change, one starting point is to *shift from shareholder to stakeholder capitalism*, as the American *Business Roundtable* and Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum endorsed two years ago, but avoiding managerialism¹⁷⁴. Another is to *shift away from a purely-growth model of economic well-being towards ecological sustainability*, as recommended by Ariel François and others. A third is to *regulate corporatism equitably* (and tax digital commerce) beyond mere voluntary instruments such as the UN Global Compact and OECD principles of corporate governance. A fourth is to *consolidate digital governance across its many domains*. Fifthly, there is a need to *reform WTO to take account of the rapid rise of e-commerce* during Covid and beyond, and to *restore the effectiveness of its Dispute Settlement Mechanism*. And, we must do more to *end impunity and strive for a universal ratification* of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and treat vaccines for Coronavirus as a Global Public Good, and advance the understanding and cause of climate change.

Some progress is being made, but in the human rights domain. The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution 26/9 at its 26th session on 26 June 2014, “*to establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, whose mandate shall be to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises.*”

Over eight years later, the tedious effort is still at the drafting stage. A third revised draft was discussed during the seventh session of the open-ended intergovernmental working group in October 2021¹⁷⁵. However, this draft treaty focuses on human rights, rights of victims, protection, prevention, remedy, liability, jurisdictions, dispute resolution, etc. To replicate such effort not only with regard to human rights obligations of transnational corporations, but also their responsibilities for environmental stewardship, corporate governance, and labour practices, integrity, transparency and ethics, digital security, etc. would be wasteful. Instead an “omnibus” treaty that covers the gamut of obligations translated from the voluntary commitment of the UN Global Compact, and the OECD principles of corporate governance, is required.

¹⁷¹ The Global Compact (United Nations) [<https://www.unglobalcompact.org>]

¹⁷² See Shaw, *International Law*, op.cit., section on *Transnational Corporations*.

¹⁷³ G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance [<http://www.oecd.org/corporate/principles-corporate-governance.htm>]

¹⁷⁴ Schwab’s approach for a “Great Reset” was heavily critiqued in “*Living in a World without Stars – the great reset offers little hope for humanity*”, by Curtis White, in Lapham’s Quarterly, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 2021 [<https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/technology/living-world-without-stars>]

¹⁷⁵ *Open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights*, UN Human Rights Council [<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/wg-trans-corp/igwg-on-tnc>]

Tackling corruption

A new global approach, regulatory and enforceable, is also relevant to the growing and often corrupting influence of corporate power and lobbies through state and regulatory capture. Governments must be pressured to follow-through on their obligations as states parties to the *UN Convention Against Corruption* against the nefarious influence of organized crime and corruption within government and the economy. Alas, although the UN Convention Against Corruption¹⁷⁶ entered into force in 2005, and 140 countries have signed it so far, Transparency International warns “*the majority of countries are making little or no progress in ending corruption*”¹⁷⁷.

In fact, the *Corruption Perceptions Index* (CPI) report for 2022 notes that 95 per cent of countries have made little to no progress since 2017¹⁷⁸. Transparency International (TI) also refers to the *Global Peace Index* to alert that the world continues to become more violent, with “*a clear connection between this violence and corruption, with countries that score lowest in this index also scoring very low on the CPP*”.

Regarding the current COVID pandemic, Transparency International (TI) noted last year that “*countries that perform well on the index invest more in health care, are better able to provide universal health coverage and are less likely to violate democratic norms and institutions or the rule of law*”. Britain’s post-Brexit seeming-relative success with its vaccination roll-out had to be set against the appalling growth of corruption as revealed two years ago by the Sunday Times and New Statesman¹⁷⁹.

But America was not spared rebuke either: TI observed, in measured critique of the former Trump presidency: “*Continuing a downward trend, the United States achieves its worst score since 2012, with 67 points. In addition to alleged conflicts of interest and abuse of office at the highest level, in 2020 weak oversight of the US\$1 trillion COVID-19 relief package raised serious concerns and marked a retreat from longstanding democratic norms promoting accountable government.*” By 2022, the USA had only marginally improved under the Biden presidency. But most of all, TI attributes the *kleptocracy and corruption of the Putin regime as the greatest driver of Russia’s threat to global peace and security*.

¹⁷⁶ The Convention covers five principal areas: preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. It includes many different forms of corruption, such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and various acts of corruption in the private sector. It also includes of a chapter on asset recovery, aimed at returning assets to their rightful owners, including countries from which they had been taken illicitly.

¹⁷⁷ *Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)*, 2017. See also the *Corruption Perceptions Index for 2022*.

¹⁷⁸ *Corruption Perceptions Index 2022*, Transparency International, Berlin, 31 January 2023 [<https://www.transparency.org/en/press/2022-corruption-perceptions-index-reveals-scant-progress-against-corruption-as-world-becomes-more-violent>] Denmark ranks on top, followed by Finland, New Zealand and Norway. Ireland rose from 20th to 10th place, between Germany and Luxembourg. Canada remained at 14th. The UK fell from 11th to 18th place, followed by France and Austria; the USA rose 1 to 24th; China remained in 65th place, shared with Cuba, Montenegro and Sao Tomé e Príncipe, but Russia fell dramatically from a very low 129 to 137th place, shared with Mali and Paraguay. But Azerbaijan fell much further from 129th to 157th place.

¹⁷⁹ See: *Corruption in Britain has reached new heights under Boris Johnson’s Government*, by Martin Fletcher, New Statesman, 29 March 2021.

[<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2021/03/corruption-britain-has-reached-new-heights-under-boris-johnson-s-government>].

Natural resources: plunder or transparency

Already, back in 2010, Paul Collier had shown that the unchecked profiteering by the super-rich, by corporations and by governments had thwarted multilateralism's aspirations for broader development progress across the world¹⁸⁰. Bad governance within and between countries lies at the root, with insufficient accountability in the poorest countries, where the exploitation of non-renewable natural assets has *not* been adequately harnessed to lift communities out of poverty – an opportunity that will pass with their plundering exhaustion. In fact, the “*resource curse*” lies in the very existence of that wealth, extracted by *foreign interests with enormous corruption* undermining governance and development e.g. from Angola's oil and diamonds, Sierra Leone's gold, to DRC's abundant minerals. Collier laid out an ethical framework to undergird future policies, demonstrating that *economic and environmental interests do not have to compete but are mutually dependent*. In all countries, effective social pressure on governments requires education, free media, and civic activism, a critical mass of informed opinion mobilised to demand accountability from political elites.

Public awareness of the revenue benefits of resource exploitation is the aim of the *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* (EITI) whose subscribing countries using the EITI voluntary standards have gone from 30 to 55 since Collier wrote¹⁸¹. The EITI aims to tackle the “*resource curse*” through *transparency and public dialogue*. Formed in 2003, it is a *multi-stakeholder* group comprising governments, corporations, and civil society organisations and foundations. Today's focus is on energy transition, where EITI can help orient responsible and transparent production of minerals, e.g. lithium, necessary for a sustainable future towards a zero-carbon benchmark. It also helps *identify and close conduits for corruption* – not only in mining, oil and gas but additionally in the renewables sector. Its *inclusive governance* has lessons for many other international organisations, and its “*validation*” or quality assurance mechanism, is a step in the right direction, but a global treaty on corporate responsibilities would help.

In his earlier book, *The Bottom Billion*, Collier had advocated for a *charter for natural resources* which would set out the entire decision chain for citizens, technocrats, and governments to understand¹⁸². He noted coordination from below, of concerned activists and experts, rather than above, seemed easier when the IMF couldn't take an initiative on that during the commodity boom. An informal network grew into an initiative chaired by Ernesto Zedillo, former Mexican president, joined in the membership by Yegor Gaidar, the reformist former prime minister of Russia, Chukwuma Soludo, a former governor of the Nigerian central bank, and Michael Spence, chairman of the *Commission on Growth and Development* (2006-2010). The Charter group made up “*in natural authority what it lacks in institutionalized power*”, as Collier put it. The Charter was launched in 2010 in Dakar and Oslo, adopted by the African Union in 2012, and revised in 2014 and comprises 12 best practice principles, that cover the sequence of decisions to be taken by governments in relation to resource extraction¹⁸³. Its growth and outreach has been much

¹⁸⁰ Collier, Paul. *The Plundered Planet - How to Reconcile Prosperity with Nature*, Allen Lane – an imprint of Penguin Books, 2010 [ISBN: 978-1-846-14223-9]. At the time, Collier spoke of the needs of six billion people. Now, we are eight billion.

¹⁸¹ See the EITI subscribing countries: [<https://eiti.org/countries>] and strategy on resource and particularly energy transition: [<https://eiti.org/blog-post/resource-governance-transition>].

¹⁸² Collier, Paul. *The Bottom Billion – Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford University Press, 2007 [ISBN: 978—0-19-531145-7]

¹⁸³ Natural Resource Governance Institute. *The Natural Resource Charter*, second edition: [https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/NRCJ1193_natural_resource_charter_19.6.14.pdf]

aided by the internet. Nonetheless, allegations of “green-washing”, especially in relation to carbon credits, continue, a current example being NGO doubts about the attempt by EQX Biome, a biodiversity fintech company, to bid for oil concessions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s rainforest and its Virunga national park in order to transform them into conservation projects¹⁸⁴. It remains to be seen how COP27 follow-up, with the Franco-Gabonese *One Forest Summit*¹⁸⁵, will proceed beyond the *Libreville Plan*¹⁸⁶, involving creation of 10 million jobs in sustainable forest management by 2030, etc.

Civil society as trigger for accountability and integrity

As Collier notes, *citizen power* is the cornerstone of the *Natural Resource Charter*. This rejoins Falk’s desire for a *global civil society*. In fact the early albeit flickering emergence of the same is sometimes visible e.g. in the Chinese government’s responsiveness to mass protests against COVID restrictive policies, or the Serbian government’s mollified reactions to protests about environmental concerns, including lithium mining licenses. Earthquakes can also become political upsets, when citizens outcry the destruction caused by corruption of officials responsible for shabby construction, as lately in Turkey. Collier speculated that if citizens around the world could be equipped with reliable and shared information, “*their pressure, country-by-country, could be as effective as a top-down inter-government agreement*”. It would be more successful than top-down government approaches that risk “gaming” systems - adversely to common public interests and goods.

Hence “*bottom up*” emancipated and democratic civic empowerment, as also borne out by the World Values Survey, is *the key to progressive multilateralism*. And neo-liberal “*shock therapy*” which may have worked economically in some cases, let alone cynical disaster capitalism, certainly are not. Inclusiveness in stakeholder consultation and impact assessment must underpin the advance consideration of radical changes. Collier believed the bottom-up approach is more promising than re-engineering inter-governmental efforts, but “*if consensus is built on collective delusion, it would be nonsense on stilts*”.

The field of globally-scoped artificial intelligence and cyberspace, and especially the activities of “*digital giants*” in harvesting personal data, also requires global regulation, including protections for personal digital privacy, such as the EU’s *General Data Protection Regulation*, a necessary but insufficient step in the right direction, its extraterritoriality notwithstanding. The control of data by digital giants gives them more power than even merited the *trust-busting* of Standard Oil a century ago. The European Commission efforts to penalize monopoly power exercised by digital giants are welcome, but plans to introduce an EU tax on digital services do not go far enough – there are other corporate giants that benefit hugely from globalisation in various sectors. Furthermore, *tax systems need to adjust for the fact that automation deprives governments of worker income tax revenue, eroding the tax base*¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁴ Greenfield, Patrick. *US firm to bid to turn DRC oil permits in Virunga national park into conservation projects*, The Guardian, 1 March 2023 [<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/01/us-firm-bid-turn-drc-oil-concessions-virunga-park-into-conservation-projects-aoe>]

¹⁸⁵ An initiative of Presidents Emmanuel Macron of France and Omar Bongo of Gabon arising from the COP27 summit in Sharm el Sheikh, 1-2 March 2023 in Libreville, aimed at tackling biodiversity loss and climate change: [<https://www.oneplanetsummit.fr/en/events-16/one-forest-summit-245>]

¹⁸⁶ The Libreville Plan: [<https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2023/03/02/the-libreville-plan>]

¹⁸⁷ Some years ago, Donald Tusk touched on this, but his comments were limited to digital giants with an effective tax rate of 9.5% instead of the 23% that traditional companies pay, and do not go far enough on taxation: see Smyth, Patrick. *Tusk tells EU leaders that tax system is ‘not fit for purpose’*, Irish Times,

There are three important aspects to this therefore: (i) to move broadly to rapidly enforce the provisions of the UN Convention Against Corruption; (ii) to develop a global convention on the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, their rights and responsibilities, with an obligatory code of conduct and enforcement mechanism; and (iii) to reform global and national regulation of competition, to prevent market concentration and state/regulatory capture; and regardless the national, international or planetary nature of the domains exploited. Active citizen and media engagement in this is essential to hold power, public and private, accountable to standards of integrity and transparency, and to eliminate and prevent "*state capture*", and "*regulatory capture*" by vested corporate and organized criminal interests.

V. Governing singular pluralism

Power involving in its orbit millions of people is by far the strongest and most dangerous of human passions in the modern world, and it is impossible to limit it without understanding the value of human life as the supreme object. That object is transcendent, it's the rebirth we are talking about here..... Is it possible in principle to return to the universalist spirit of the UN Charter?

- Yuri Senokosov, *In Search of Lost Universalism*

V.1. Erosions of fundamental authority

More fundamentally, the result of these and other conundrums is that we are facing, and now having to adjust to, three major erosions of authority globally, and particularly in Western society, and these are enjoined by growing inequality, and rising populist extremism. Combined with a decline in faith and trust, they threaten not only the fabric of our societies, but the peace and stability of our world.

The great economic success of the post-war (WW2) years and the heyday of the welfare state gave us all a sense of supreme security - Cold War notwithstanding - and we became more prosperous than ever, and complacent. But the Reagan-Thatcher era damaged the notion of workers' rights and trade unions, laying the ground for growing inequality. Even so, *Solidarity* (Solidarność) in Poland contributed to post-Soviet emancipation.

The combination of economic *neo*-liberalism, free trade, deregulation of markets, and the huge post-Cold War new capitalist surge eastward profiting from the collapse of socialist economies, created enormous new wealth – and poverty. Combined with the advent of information technology, this further contributed to a growing sense of inequality. Another factor aggravating inequality has been the excessive austerity policies that followed the *Great Recession* since 2008.

The end of the Cold War incubated a sense of Western triumphalism that ignored the human and political cost of Eastern Europe's transition, which Western societies have now suffered in the wake of the *Great Recession*, the pandemic impact, and the inflation and energy crises, and *the historic shift of capital and growth from the West to Asia and other emerging markets*. NATO's eastward expansion also became an irritant to Moscow's hegemonic ambitions to recover control over the independent states of the former Soviet Union.

Dublin, 20 March 2018 [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/tusk-tells-eu-leaders-that-tax-system-is-not-fit-for-purpose-1.3433716>].

In this regard, for relatively minor illegal and hotly disputed territorial gains, *Putin squandered Russia's hitherto considerable "soft power" with the West, to the detriment of all, East, West, and South.* In the circumstances of Russia's repeated aggressions against its neighbours, former President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine quipped "*it is not NATO going East but the East going to NATO*". And in a counter to apparently appeasing voices calling for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine, former President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia observed "*Russia has no face left to save*". As President José Ramos Horta of Timor Leste said, Putin made an "*epic miscalculation*"¹⁸⁸.

But if Russia is in trouble for flagrant violations of international law, the USA/West is also to blame for the *double standards* of its interventionism in the Middle East and South, for its environmental depredation and carbon consumption, as acutely felt by countries of the countries of the G-77 group and *Non-Aligned Movement*.

This a challenge where the European Union can exhibit conciliatory leadership within the wider framework of a new *Agenda for Peace* under United Nations auspices, and with other key partners. But it needs to be more geo-politically robust and nimble, as China engaged in brokering the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023, which should open up space for other peace initiatives in the region, especially regarding consolidation of peace in Yemen, and a renewed focus on Palestine/Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. This demands a more robust engagement by the United Nations as well, given its various resolutions addressing conflicts in the region.

Political authority

All of this led to growing political apathy, which later morphed into disregard for the political authority of the "*establishment*", especially as the IT revolution, freedom-of-information laws, and the media exposed the extent of corruption and scandals that would have been unknown by previous generations. Integrity, probity, honour, and accountability are corroding fast.

Parliamentary electoral democracy in the West has suffered declines in voter participation when choices are between now-traditional political parties. In contrast, newer forms of direct democracy that bypass party politics and engage referenda on policy choices, as well as citizen forums, and greater use of statistical data and polling surveys, may open new paths for more effective civic action.

Unless public trust is nurtured, including through robust tackling of corruption and upholding ethics and integrity for public representatives, democracy itself can no longer be taken for granted even in its oldest exemplars¹⁸⁹. The problem with increasing popular disillusion with politicians, governance institutions, and indeed with the practice of democracy, is that so-called default options render people gullible to faith in a "strong man", a prelude to dictatorship.

¹⁸⁸ Remarks made by these three presidents at the 10th Global Baku Forum, hosted by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center, 9-11 March 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

¹⁸⁹ Taub, Amanda. *How stable are democracies? 'Warning signs are flashing red'*, The Interpreter, New York Times, 29 November 2016; [\[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=0\]](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=0)

Religious authority

Following on this erosion of political authority, and changing *mores* in emerging culture wars, the next to weaken was traditional religious authority, primarily Christian, sundered by exposure of abuse scandals, institutional hypocrisy, corruption, and the advent of new social “norms”, discrediting old values, for example as brought about by various social changes around notions of gender, marriage and the family.

Islamic authority has faced similar problems, but differently responded, through radical Islamism, that denies a separation of state and faith, leading ultimately to theocracy or catastrophic extremism. On the other hand, emerging prosperity in parts of the Arab world in particular, coupled with inter-faith dialogue, the *Abraham Accords*, and indeed modern reinterpretation of religious texts, has led to a growth in moderate values, repudiation of extremism, and support for gender equality¹⁹⁰. The *Arab Spring* resulted, faltering under repression, and the ensuing civil wars across the region, but the ember of democratic hope and accountable government has not extinguished entirely, despite the countervailing *Arab Winter*. Adherence to the EITI might propel reforms¹⁹¹.

It remains to be seen how rabbinical authority in Israel will be affected in the longer-run by controversial changes in its laws and by the participation of far-right religious parties in government coalitions, but as long as the peace process with the Palestinians stagnates and resolution of conflict remains distant, a return to more-secular culture that characterised the early decades of Israel’s existence will prove elusive. Meanwhile, the country may face capital flight the more it tends to increasing authoritarianism, with the perception of an erosion of democratic norms and culture. For multiple reasons it seems imperative that the US and the EU must work vigorously together with the UN and the parties directly concerned to drive forward a renewal of the peace process, perhaps returning to re-consider the Olmert peace plan of 2008, or others, *mutatis mutandis*, and with due regard for the *Arab Peace Initiative* of 2002, and the *Abraham Accords*.

Scientific authority

The third erosion, more recent, is the *erosion of scientific authority* (esp. in UK and USA) – not for any good scientific reason, but rather because the iconoclastic nature of popular culture and the negative anti-establishment messaging of political populism have sown unreasonable doubt and dispute. This is exemplified by controversies in the media and politics about vaccines, the veracity of climate change, the ethics of biotechnology, the risks of artificial intelligence, and the credibility of financial and economic analyses.

These doubts are exploited by a new radical fringe of right, alt-right, and sometimes left-wing politicians, who vaunt themselves as anti-establishment, decry globalisation and multilateralism, promote chauvinistic nationalism, and enable growing xenophobia, and

¹⁹⁰ See especially the late Muhammad Shahrur’s major opus. *The Qu’ran, Morality and Critical Reason - The Essential Muhammad Shahrur* (translated, edited, and with an introduction by Andreas Christmann), Koninklijke Brill NV (incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP), Leiden, The Netherlands, 2009 [ISBN 978 90 04 17103 9]. In the late 1960s, Shahrur, then a student of soil chemistry and civil engineering, regularly discussed philosophy, especially Kant and *The Enlightenment*, with this author over games of chess in Glasnevin, Dublin, when the latter was a student of philosophy in University College Dublin. He was a prominent member of the former Irish-Arab Society set up after discussions with Arab friends in this writer’s family home in Glasnevin. The society helped Ireland establish diplomatic relations with twelve countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

¹⁹¹ The *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative*. Most Arab countries have not yet adhered to its membership or standards. Adhesion could be potentially transformative (see page 38 above).

mainly by being so more adept and active, for now, at using social media. Their messaging is often, though not always, characterised by sound-bites, untruths, outrage, drama, bigotry, demonisation, and base populism.

Remedies

These erosions of authority are a recipe for the usurpation of governance, and the fomenting of civilisational catastrophe. The enemy within is now as dangerous, if not more so, than the enemy real or imagined beyond. It warrants a global wake-up call, and a seizing of our collective conscience to address the following imperatives:

1. *Extolling the vision of a world based on human dignity and universal values and upholding the highest standards of leadership integrity and competence.* In this regard, mandates and action to *promote equal female participation in all levels of leadership will be most important, worldwide.* Exclusivist or nativist populism should provoke corrective measures for inclusive equity, social cohesion, and systemic reforms. Reforms should be driven by truth based on peer-reviewed expert analysis and big data harvesting, i.e. facts, not “fake news”. This is a vital field for strategic research and corrective awareness-raising and global civic education, and for using public-private partnerships to entrench corporate social responsibility by social media and the Big 5 data-harvesting conglomerates who should be obliged to cooperate with independent research centers, universities and think tanks, to enable *evidence-based* policy-making, and to support United Nations *foresight capability*.
2. *Tackling the real extent of growing inequality and the need for reducing it through restoring social and economic equity.* Vital to this is ending excessive austerity, socially-enabling taxation reforms, and public as well as private investing in youth employment and peripheral or marginalized communities. In this regard, before the COVID pandemic Yanis Varoufakis had explained the importance of America’s ‘*deficit phobia*’ in the past, but indicated the risks of its current inability to maintain it following the failure of its global surplus recycling to recover from the 2008 recession¹⁹². In fact, the USA has not had a budget surplus since fiscal 2001, and the deficit for 2022 stands at US\$1.38 trillion. Surges in the deficit occurred in years of the 2008/9 recession, and more recently in 2020 and 2021, latterly primarily due to increased government spending related to social security, i.e. widespread unemployment, employment/furlough subsidies and health care for the COVID19 pandemic, as many other countries also experienced¹⁹³. Its trade (goods and service) deficit rose during the early stages of the pandemic but has since declined. Overall, in 2022 that deficit increased by US\$103 billion, or 12.2%, with particular impact from trade disputes with China, but also a continuing deficit with Japan¹⁹⁴. Unfortunately, Germany’s deficit phobia prevents it from recycling global surpluses¹⁹⁵, just as China has very limited

¹⁹² Varoufakis, Yanis. *And the Weak Suffer What They Must? – Europe, Austerity and the Threat to Global Stability*, published by The Bodley Head (Penguin Random House group), London, 2016, pp. 234-246 [ISBN: 978-1-847-92404-9].

¹⁹³ US Treasury data, 2023 [<https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/national-deficit/>]

¹⁹⁴ US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023 [<https://www.bea.gov/news/2023/us-international-trade-goods-and-services-december-and-annual-2022#>]

¹⁹⁵ Before COVID, some debate arose about the Eurozone being, under German influence, inward-looking, and macroeconomically naïve, failing to realise that a Eurozone trade surplus of nine per cent would severely damage stability and growth across the South, eventually harming Europe itself.

scope, but China's OBOR (Belt and Road Initiative) is a different way of addressing this collaboratively. The EU registered a trade deficit of €431.2 billion in 2022, compared to a surplus of €55.1 billion in 2021. This dramatic turn-around was due to the energy impact of the Russia's war on Ukraine as imports surged by 41.3% to €3 billion, led by a 113.6% surge for energy products¹⁹⁶. Like Varoufakis, Blyth also savages the practicality of austerity, as neither sensible nor coherent¹⁹⁷. A return to such debate now arises, after the fiscal burden of pandemic subsidies, and the energy crisis – but the role of government in economic management has never been so prominent as now, nor has pan-EU solidarity. As this author had personally lobbied in 2011, both in regard to Ireland's eventual bail-out and the Greek quagmire, austerity *per se* lacks a human rights-based dimension¹⁹⁸, and as Blyth muses, if economists had to adopt the humanitarian “do no harm” imperative they would be prohibited from practicing austerity economics¹⁹⁹.

3. *Restricting and regulating excessive market concentration, eliminating monopolies, and rolling back oligopolies in favour of more open competition.* The world is big enough to be able to afford more diversity in the markets of banking/finance, healthcare, agriculture, industry, transport, commodities, technology, media, retail, and services, but open markets require strengthening competition regulation. *Planet before profit* is the demand of millennials, and their consumer power is increasingly felt, e.g. in the anti-gun lobbying curtailing the influence of the NRA (National Rifle Association) in the USA. Crowdfunding will become the main resource for start-ups, revolutionising the scope for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and providing new avenues for employment of which they are the main source globally, in contrast to increasingly automation-intensive global corporations.
4. *Restricting, in the public interest, and by international treaty if necessary, the resources, assets, and influence of billionaire UHNWIs (i.e. ultra-high net worth individuals) through taxation, and other equitable measures.* According to Oxfam, the richest 1% of people gained twice the amount of wealth worth

¹⁹⁶ Trading Economics, 2023 [<https://tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/balance-of-trade>]

¹⁹⁷ Blyth, Mark. *Austerity – The History of a Dangerous Idea*, published by Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 230-244 [ISBN: 978-0-19-982830-2].

¹⁹⁸ During this author's Irish Senate electoral campaign in early 2011. Hitherto uninvolved in Irish politics, and resident abroad, he was belatedly nominated by a panel of electors of the constituency of the National University of Ireland, his *alma mater*. In the event, the three successful candidates for that constituency were all already well-known public figures in Ireland, two of them retaining their seats.

¹⁹⁹ Blyth, *op. cit.* p. 242. At his time of writing, Blyth noted that the Tax Justice Network estimated that 32 trillion US dollars were hidden offshore in tax havens, more than twice the value of the American national debt. If Trump's tax “reforms” led to an amnestied repatriation of those hoards, then that may have helped. In both Europe, especially Germany, and the USA, the scope for greater taxation of the top end of the income and wealth spectra, is considerable. Ignored by Trump, a tax on the top 1% at over 80% would have raised rather than lowered revenue. Raising it to 43.5% from 22.4% would have raised revenue by 3% of GDP, according to Peter Diamond of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Emanuel Saez of the University of California. A group of German economists calculated that a one time capital levy of 10% on personal net wealth exceeding €250,000 per taxpayer would increase revenue by 9% of GDP. That would affect 8% of Germans, who own two-thirds of national wealth. A threshold four times as high (i.e. €1m) would still raise revenue up to 5.6% of GDP.

US\$42 trillion over the past two years as the rest of the world combined²⁰⁰. Oxfam recommends a 5% tax on the super-rich (multi-millionaires and billionaires), which could raise US\$1.7 trillion a year, “enough to lift 2 billion people out of poverty:

Taxing the super-rich and big corporations is the door out of today’s overlapping crises. It’s time we demolish the convenient myth that tax cuts for the richest result in their wealth somehow ‘trickling down’ to everyone else. Forty years of tax cuts for the super-rich have shown that a rising tide doesn’t lift all ships — just the superyachts.”

Within that cohort of Ultra High Net Worth Individuals, (UHNWI), there are now an estimated 2,668 billionaires, whose total wealth exceeds US\$ 12.7 trillion, up from 1,226 billionaires in 2012, worth only US\$ 4.6 trillion then²⁰¹. Their number doubled in the last ten years, but their wealth tripled. The ten richest, all men, have combined assets that exceed the GDP of Brazil, Australia, Spain, Mexico, Indonesia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, or Saudi Arabia, individually²⁰². Overall, America leads with 735 billionaires, with China (including Hong Kong and Macau) next with 607, surpassing Russia which was in 2nd place ten years ago. At the current rate, China will soon surpass the USA in billionaires (some estimates indicate it may already have done so). In the course of 2022, the COVID pandemic, war in Ukraine, and sluggish growth reduced wealth and numbers, especially in Russia which lost 34 billionaires. Ironically, according to the lately-beleaguered Credit Suisse, in 2021 “total global wealth grew by 9.8% and wealth per adult reached USD 87,489. Setting aside exchange rate movements, aggregate global wealth grew by 12.7% in 2021, which is the fastest annual rate ever recorded”. It estimates that “boosted by the impact of government support measures, aggregate global wealth (of the whole world population from top to bottom) has risen by USD 41.4 trillion (+9.8%) to a combined total of USD 463.6 trillion.” But the richest 1.2% now own 48% of the household wealth²⁰³. The disparities are enormous.

This is obscene, and the trend is absolutely working in the wrong direction. Some years ago, Warren Buffet himself lamented that he became over US\$27 billion richer as a result of Trump’s tax reforms, which he vigorously opposed, in the public interest. Unregulated globalisation shelters the super-rich, who have in essence become transnational, a new class often devoid of national let alone local loyalty, and whose excessive wealth is anti-social and accumulates power in dangerous unaccountable obscurity. While some billionaires are generous donors, the self-effacing Chuck Feeney is the one example of a complete personal repudiation of such wealth. He gave all his US\$8 billion away “to make the world a better place”, and now owns no property, travels in economy, lives in rented

²⁰⁰ Oxfam report “Survival of the Richest”, 2023 [<https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-bag-nearly-twice-much-wealth-rest-world-put-together-over-past-two-years>]

²⁰¹ See Forbes: *The World’s Billionaires List – Richest in 2022* [<https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>]

²⁰² IPS analysis of Forbes *Live Billionaires List* and World Bank.

²⁰³ Credit Suisse *Global Wealth Data Book 2022*. [<https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html>]

property, and shuns consumerism²⁰⁴. But in worse cases, billionaire largesse and philanthropy can also distort democratic resource allocation, particularly in small developing economies. Lately, over 200 millionaires urged participants at the latest World Economic Forum in Davos to “*tax the ultra-rich*”²⁰⁵.

5. *Developing an international legal framework or convention on the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, their rights and responsibilities, with an obligatory code of conduct and the necessary mechanisms for independent review, enforcement, and regulation of competition, as argued above in preceding sections. Eradicating corruption and money-laundering, and obliging corporate and individual social and environmental responsibility should lie at the core of such conventions, which should also set limits on the accumulation of individual power and wealth, on the levels of private and/or corporate financial contributions to national and municipal election campaigns, and also ensure the disqualification from public office of those convicted in court of egregious transgressions of the rule of law, especially corrupt abuse of power in any public office hitherto held.*

To enhance public trust and build resilience for sustainable recovery, some reforms are also needed in capital markets and international financial institutions, in addition to those required to address the vulnerabilities of algorithmically-driven trading, and adjust to the lessons of the Great Recession of 2008, and the pandemic and current energy, food and climate crises.

V.2. Multilateralism and world order

Ideals and influences

With all this going on, and these negative trends and risks growing, how then is the world ordered? We might think here of global rules and norms, the UN Charter, international law. But these are ideals, aspirations, and prescriptive/imperative – they describe the world *as it should be*, but not *as it is*. This question is therefore multi-dimensional. In actual reality, the world is ordered organically as an ecosystem *in ways we do not understand*. This is true of the sphere of human activity too: the interactions of cause and effect produce phenomena that interplay in ways we may not know, to produce “results” which some might consider outcomes, but which are merely intermediate conditions that may impact on our lives and societies in large or small ways, for the better or for the worse, depending on what our aspirations are.

From cosmic or solar influences to geography, climate, environment, to migration, education, politics, economics, and security, etc. we try to manage our societies for the well-being of people. The underlying conditions, principles of agency, and laws of nature itself are still a field of discovery and reinterpretation. It is complex, and complexifying

²⁰⁴ O’Clery, Conor. *Chuck Feeney – the billionaire who gave it all away*, an article published in The Irish Times, Dublin, 3 March 2018: [<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/chuck-feeney-the-billionaire-who-gave-it-all-away-1.3413084>].

²⁰⁵ CNBC: [<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/01/18/over-200-millionaires-urge-davos-elite-to-up-taxes-on-the-ultra-rich.html>]

more²⁰⁶. Indeed, the science of chaos may help us get a better understanding²⁰⁷. There is after all, some order in what we experience as chaos. We just need to know how, and in the affairs of humanity, we need indeed to direct our “chaos”, and regulate our behaviours, interactions, and outcomes.

As Fukuyama pointed out, liberal principles based on self-interest alone *corrode the pre-liberal values necessary to preserve strong communities* – heralding a threat to the ability of liberal societies to be self-sustaining²⁰⁸. We need more. Perfect rights and defective duties are a poor recipe for the acting person seeking personal integration through the commandment of love as the rule of being, and acting together with others²⁰⁹. How then can we regulate ourselves, as we are entirely part of this global *social biome*, this planetary ecosystem and its microcosms, this web of life?

From bi-polar balance to alignment disorder

When the World War II Allies were victorious, it was assumed that the world would be somewhat multi-polar, at least between the Big Five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council, although the USA was the only nuclear superpower at the time²¹⁰. The ensuing Cold War, better described as a *Cold Peace*, was in that sense an aberration of anticipated stability, in what could otherwise have been a much more dynamic world. Yet, there is a sense today that the world had achieved a measure of predictability and order during the Cold War. Geopolitics were neatly divided into two principle camps, the Communist and the Capitalist, respectively led by the USSR and the USA. China was in splendid isolation, and the rest of the world, being underdeveloped and only recently de-colonised, came together under the aegis of the *Non-Aligned*

²⁰⁶ See: *The Science and Praxis of Complexity – Contributions to the Symposium held at Montpellier, France, 9-11 May 1984*, published by The United Nations University, Tokyo, 1985 [ISBN: 92-808-560-6]; (Contributors: S. Aida, P.M. Allen, H. Atlan, K.E. Boulding, G.P. Chapman, O. Costa de Beauregard, A. Danzin, J.-P. Dupuy, O. Giarini, T. Hagerstrand, C.S. Holling, M.J.L. Kirby, G.J. Klir, H. Laborit, J.-L. Le Moigne, N. Luhmann, P. Malaska, R. Margalef, E. Morin, E.W. Ploman, K.H. Pribram, I. Prigogine, Soejatmoko, J. Voe, M. Zeleny). See in particular (i) the essay *Autonomy and Complexity in Sociology*, by Jean-Pierre Dupuy, and his comments on the *Archetype of the Process of Social Totalization, Panic Metaphors and Von Foerster's Conjecture*, and *Liberal Political Philosophy*; (ii) *Towards a Science of Complex Systems*, by Peter M. Allen, who relates this to decision-making, policy formulation and the dangers of short-termism; (iii) *Spontaneous Social Orders*, by Milan Zeleny, with a historical synopsis, and perspectives on *Social Autopoiesis or Self-Production*; (iv) *Complexity, Democracy and Governance*, by Michael J. L. Kirby – a very appropriate discussion; (v) Pentti Malasky wrote a piece *Outline of a Policy for the Future*, touching on basic needs, growth, development, germs, nucleation, dominance, and automation

²⁰⁷ Gleick, James. *Chaos – Making a New Science*, published in Cardinal by Sphere Books, a division of MacDonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., a member of Maxwell Pergamon Publishing Corporation, plc., London, 1989 [ISBN: 0-7474-0413-5].

²⁰⁸ Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*, published by Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp. 322-327 [ISBN: 0-14-015419-1].

²⁰⁹ Wojtyła, Karol. *The Acting Person*, published by D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, 1979 [ISBN: 90-277-0969-6]. St. John-Paul II's synthesis of Thomism and Phenomenology, on the ontic status of the person and intersubjectivity. See also Martin Buber's book *I and Thou*, published as *Ich und Du* in 1923, translated by Walter Kaufman and re-published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1970.

²¹⁰ For an insightful treatment of the decisive role that former US President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) played in the immediate post-war era, including in regard to the foundation of Israel, see Abba Eban's *Diplomacy for the Next Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1998 [ISBN: 0-300-07860-9]. Eban, who played a role in the drafting of UN Security Council resolution 242 in 1967, and the later supported peace accords, was strongly critical of Israeli policies for Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Movement, significantly led by Tito's Yugoslavia, when not directly made proxies under the influence of the two superpower rivals of the time²¹¹.

New forces also emerged, technological, civic, corporate, and criminal, and the combination of these inevitably brought quantum change, the end of the Cold War, the break-up of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and ensuing socio-economic turmoil in collapsed command economies. Through the 1990s, any expected "*peace dividend*" was quickly diverted as about forty conflicts raged in countries across the world. These were no longer *ideological proxy wars*, but rather largely internal inter-ethnic conflicts fueled by an increasing polarization of societies, a surge in small arms and heavier weapons unleashed, the nefarious influence of the narcotics trade and organised crime, and anti-state terrorism.

Rights and responsibilities

Back in 1997, it seemed a tandem symbiosis might emerge *between rights and responsibilities*. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for a *rights-based approach to development*, and Mary Robinson stepped down as President of Ireland and became the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a strong advocacy brief, which led in 2003 to the adoption of a common UN system rights-based approach, embraced also by development partners including NGOs. Also in 1997, anticipating the 50th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the InterAction Council (a body comprised mainly of former heads of states & government, arguably the oldest such), adopted a complementary *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*, endorsed by many of the world's most eminent and respected statespeople²¹². The Council had worked on drafting a set of core human responsibilities for the preceding decade, and the goal was to lend rights and responsibilities equal importance "*to establish an ethical base so that all men and women can live peacefully together and fulfil their potential. A better social order both nationally and internationally cannot be achieved by laws, prescriptions and conventions alone, but needs a global ethic*". The approach was also seen as an attempt to transition away from the welfare model which treated the poor as objects of charity, limiting their role in civil society, and which failed to hold governments responsible for inaction as duty-bearers for rights holders.

Looking back now a quarter of a century later, one must observe that neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, nor the rights-based approach to development, nor the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, stood much of a chance in the years that followed, notwithstanding the global adoption of the *Millennium Declaration* and its development goals (MDGs), nor the later *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). The conditions for these to progress have been stymied time and again, first by 9/11 and the "*war against terror*", then by the ensuing financial crisis and Great Recession of 2008, by the failures of "*globalisation*" with trade wars and the rise of populist regimes, and latterly by the COVID pandemic, and the impact of the Russian war against Ukraine, with ensuing energy and food insecurity.

²¹¹ At the 10th Global Baku Forum, held 8-11 March 2023 in Baku, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan announced the creation of parliamentary and youth networks for the Non-Aligned Movement, which his country has chaired for the period 2019-2023, having taken several steps to re-vitalise the NAM with a view to its potential to "*build bridges and help resolve conflicts*". The NAM represents about two-thirds of the membership of the UN, a considerable platform when it can agree on common positions.

²¹² InterAction Council, *A Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*, 1 September 1997 [<https://www.interactioncouncil.org/publications/universal-declaration-human-responsibilities>]

Elusive wisdom

And even so, if we believe in human freedom, free will, free intellect, our *nous* and *nóēsis*, we cannot do this without having our own collective rules of behaviour. From the Hammurabic and Mosaic Codes, Brehon Law, Magna Carta and other ancient codices, through the Treaty of Westphalia, to the UN Charter and the body of international law as we know it today, we continue on a journey of *prescriptive human self-regulation* upon which in our era, *for the first time, the entire web of life itself now depends*. We are now at the dawn of the *Anthropocene*, or as Vladmimir Ivanovich Vernadsky might have put it, the era of human history that should be governed by the *Noosphere*, a concept then taken up by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to develop his own philosophy and concept of the *Omega Point*²¹³. We may observe, belatedly, our impact on the world heralding the Anthropocene, but are now embarked on the next stage, the knowledge-based *Epistocene*. Our goal must be however, to obtain human fulfillment through wisdom, and not knowledge alone; we must strive therefore for the *Sophicene*. This is not just a journey of knowledge. It is a trajectory of *ethics, wisdom and transcendent spirituality*.

We suffer however from a time lag, between our experience of global change, and our understanding of it, let alone our ability to prescriptively influence it. If historians are still trying to work out new schema for interpreting new information on what happened long ago, should we be surprised that economists are still struggling to understand consumer and market behaviour, and politicians are forever trying to re-write rules – too often to suit themselves? In the meantime, Big Data, and artificial intelligence are enabling a select few of the most powerful to have deeper insight into complex dynamics, and to direct our behaviour in ways we are not even aware of.

And this brings us to the question of *what levels of power are acceptable, appropriate?* And if you wish, of *apex* power, governed by ethics, accountability, transparency, and democracy. And inevitably, infused with full respect for human rights and personal dignity and integrity. And this is why *we need rules that hold fast and a global order that prevents impunity*.

A galvanising vision excludes impunity

By the year 2000, as some of these conflicts petered-out, the world's countries rallied behind the *Millennium Declaration*, remarkable in that *for the first time* all countries in the world agreed on a set of *aspirational political and development objectives and targets that would enhance the human condition and global peace*. But matters multilateral, and global trust in world order, were not helped by the perception in many countries in the global south of *double standards* manifested in US-driven wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and other countries and in its support of régimes that violated human rights with impunity, or the laws of occupation, nor helped by Russia's role in fomenting unrecognised breakaway statelets in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, its illicit annexation of Crimea, nor its repudiation of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and continuing conflict in Donbass. Whilst Minsk II was a failure, matters came to a head when Russia, *without provocation* from Ukraine, massively invaded that country on 24 February 2022. The war continues, genocidal in Putin's intent to wipe Ukraine as an independent sovereign state off the map and annihilate its distinct culture and language by indiscriminate destruction, repression, deportation and death.

²¹³ Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *The Phenomenon of Man*, published in 1955.

While this tragedy has not yet reached the scale of death in Iraq, for which no indictments have yet been issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), the corpus of case materials for prosecution of war crimes has grown enormously in recent years, way beyond Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals, deriving out of the experience and records of Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (Khmer Rouge Tribunal), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), and is *a firm bedrock of jurisprudence today for ending impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide*. Widening ratification of the Rome Statute by more countries *is essential to bring an end to impunity*. But neither this, nor failure of the main parties at war in Ukraine to ratify the Statute, has prevented the ICC, after enormous effort at documenting war crimes, to indict President Vladimir Putin. More can be expected.

The consequences are global, with the Ukrainian people firmly determined to resist, with the support of the EU, USA and rest of the West, including NATO, who are now united as never before, with resounding UN condemnation of Russian aggression by six UN General Assembly resolutions, that garnered global majority support, with energy and food insecurity aggravated around the world, and combined with pandemic impact, with rising inflation and minimal economic growth, and most of all with global institutions unable to respond effectively and world order increasingly seen to be fragile and frayed, and major damage done to global solidarity, trust, and multilateral cooperation.

The unsustainability of hegemony

As for the European Union, as Henry Kissinger pointed out, European countries can only hope to play a major role in world affairs as a united community of nations, i.e. through the EU, and this is a lesson that Brexiteers seem not to understand in their fallback to a nostalgic and hegemonic fantasy of the Commonwealth if not the British Empire²¹⁴. America, on its part, needs to recognise its declining comparative power, and ensure that it understands its role as a neo-Empire superpower, and that it supports if not leads multilateralism towards *a global order that makes empire and superpower hegemony impossible*²¹⁵. Only thus can our planetary survival be optimised. It is not by any means clear that more nations will not collapse, including a great power²¹⁶. And there are particular dangers looming for Russia, internally²¹⁷.

²¹⁴ Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy*, Touchstone (Simon & Schuster Inc.), 1994 [ISBN: 0-671-51099-1]. For a practitioner's guide see: Sen, Biswanath. *A Diplomat's Handbook of International Law and Practice*, Revised Third Edition, with Foreword by Javier Perez de Cuellar, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers (Kluwer Academic Publishers), Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1988 [ISBN: 90-247-3647-1]. For diplomatic protocol, see: McCaffree/Innis, Mary Jane & Pauline. *Protocol – The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official and Social Usage*, Hepburn Books, Dallas, 1997 [ISBN: 0-941402-04-5].

²¹⁵ Garrison, Jim. *America as Empire – Global Leader or Rogue Superpower*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, 2004 [ISBN: 1-57675-281-x]. See also Soros, George. *The Bubble of American Supremacy*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2004 [ISBN: 0-297-84909-9]. Other useful resources are: Blum, William. *Rogue State – a Guide to the World's only Superpower*, Zed Books, London, 2003 [ISBN: 1-84277-221-x], and Chomsky, Noam. *Deterring Democracy*, Vintage Books, 1992 [ISBN: 0-09-913501-9].

²¹⁶ See: Acemoglu, Daron & Robinson, James A. *Why Nations Fail – The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, published by Profile Books Ltd., London, 2013 [ISBN: 978-1846684302]. Also: Greidner, William. *One World, Ready or Not – The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, published by Touchstone (Simon & Schuster, Inc.), New York, 1998 [ISBN: 0-684-83554-1]; and of course: Friedman, Thomas L. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree – Understanding Globalization*, published by Anchor Books (Random House, Inc.), New York, 2000 [ISBN: 0-385-49934-5].

²¹⁷ Kasparov, Gary. *Winter is Coming – Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World must be Stopped* (with Meg Greengard), Atlantic Books, London, 2015 [ISBN: 978-1-78239-786-1]. See also:

V.3. Preserving the Global Commons

Driven by the prospect of lucrative profit in new frontiers, global corporate conglomerates are increasingly moving to exploit *non-national* resources, i.e. the *global commons* of ostensible planetary ecosystems and public goods that lie outside individual national sovereignty, for example, in the oceans and in Earth's orbit and outer space. Both of these global domains are already massively littered with debris, from satellite discards to floating masses of plastic, and other kinds of noxious environmental waste²¹⁸. And it is going to get much, much worse. Inter-generational equity warrants a new mandatory ethic of sustainable institutional and corporate stewardship, and in many cases, remediation.

The Biosphere: genetics, intelligence and privacy

Another aspect of the global commons relates to *bio-ethical standards* and the seven biomes of the Earth, and in particular the appropriation of ownership of naturally-occurring genetic material, e.g. of rare species with benefits for human health, or of genetically-modified organisms. The field of globally-scoped artificial intelligence and cyberspace, and especially the activities of “digital giants”, not least in regards to wielding political influence, and in harvesting private personal data, also requires a global regulation, including protections for personal digital privacy.

The Oceans and Seas

Climate change will also open up new investment opportunities in the Arctic and Antarctic which will be mismanaged unless a proper global legal regime is adopted for enforcing corporate responsibilities, state or private.

Unfortunately, not least given its massive interests in the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the USA has still not ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), nor participates in the International Seabed Authority (ISA), although it has observer status there. Yet companies based in Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Nauru, Russia, Tonga and UK all have substantial exploration (not exploitation) contracts; the rate of new contracts is expanding quickly²¹⁹.

Nonetheless, several Caribbean and Latin American countries have concerns about the lack of proper and thorough information about intended *mining* operations and the credibility of any consequent environmental and oceanic impact assessments. As a result, they are currently opposing plans for the ISA to issue licenses already in 2023 for deep sea mineral exploration.²²⁰ A planned *Global Mining Code* for commercial exploration may be issued by ISA in 2024, but Chile wants it to be delayed by at least 15 years. Nonetheless, the new *High Seas Treaty* augurs well, and the ISA has stated that any future

Dawisha, Karen. *Putin's Kleptocracy – Who Owns Russia?*, Simon & Schuster, Inc. New York, 2014 [ISBN: 978-1-4767-9519-5].

²¹⁸ Harrabin, Roger. *Ocean plastic could treble in decade*, published online by the BBC, London, 21 March 2018 [<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43477233>]. The article points out the huge environmental risks, but also the coming massive investment and exploitation opportunities.

²¹⁹ e.g. for polymetallic nodules and cobalt-rich and ferro-manganese crusts. See: [<https://www.isa.org.jm/mining-code>]

²²⁰ Guerrero, Maurizio. *Opposition Grows Among Countries as Seabed-Mining Efforts Push Ahead*, Passblue, 2 January 2023 [<https://www.passblue.com/2023/01/02/opposition-grows-among-countries-as-seabed-mining-efforts-push-ahead/>]

activity in the deep seabed will now be subject to strict environmental regulations and oversight, presumably once the new treaty enters into force²²¹.

Ironically, the USA helped shape the Convention, but has objected to Part XI of it, due to pressure from the Republican party, and concerns about the extent of its sovereignty over its maritime exclusive economic zone, and “*setting a precedent for outer space*”. However, in recent years the one outstanding impediment was a lack of Senate majority, despite “*overwhelming support for US accession by all American government agencies, [and] major interest groups.*”²²².

An American ratification would add great force to obliging China, which has done so, but ignored it, to abide by international arbitral court ruling on the illegality of China’s “*Nine Dash Line*” in the South China Sea. It would be a counter-ploy to the recent Chinese Coast Guard Law, passed on 22 January 2021 and enforced on 1 February 2021, taking advantage of the distractions of the Trump-Biden transition²²³. It would also bring greater political stability to the challenge of rivalry over claims in the Arctic Ocean in this era of global warming, where Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Russia and the United States all have claims. However, although UNCLOS and the ISA may be necessary, they are insufficient in scope and authority as instruments to adequately regulate multinational corporations (MNCs), and it is of little benefit if the source of the largest amount of global corporate capital, namely the USA, abstains.

Outer Space

The past half century has seen the progressive expansion in the use of outer space, but also the *increasing deviation* from the principles of the *1967 Outer Space Treaty*²²⁴. It is fair to say that the three initial depository signatories, the Russian Federation, the UK and the USA, have collectively failed to ensure adherence, in some cases themselves violating the core principles.

The UN’s *Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*, unfortunately does not address the progressive militarisation of the orbital domain, which poses major risks, and should also be addressed by the UN Security Council as a threat to all humanity. For example, few are aware of the Russian attack, on the US-owned Viasat commercial SATCOM network that served Ukraine and eastern Europe, launched *just an hour* before its latest major aggression and invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, *while it was cynically presiding over the UN Security Council*. The hack, which disabled Ukrainian government agencies using the Viasat network, was subsequently attributed to the Russian military intelligence agency, the GRU, by American, British and European Union authorities.

²²¹ United Nations: UN delegates reach historic agreement on protecting marine biodiversity in international waters, 5 March 2023 [<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134157>]

²²² Beckman, Robert. *On the United States, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and US Freedom of Navigation operations*, Fulcrum, 5 August 2022 [<https://fulcrum.sg/on-the-united-states-the-un-convention-on-the-law-of-the-sea-and-us-freedom-of-navigation-operations/>]

²²³ Huang, James. *China Threatens War through Coast Guard Law*, article published online by Marianas Variety, Micronesia’s leading newspaper, 24 March 2021.

²²⁴ The Outer Space Treaty, formally the *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space*, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, is a treaty that forms the basis of international space law, and entered into force in October 1967. [<https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/introouterspacetreaty.html>]

This has prompted much more robust coordination between the *Five Eyes* and allied Western intelligence services, and a focus on better global governance on this domain advocated by the *Centre for International Governance Innovation* (CIGI), an independent think-tank co-funded privately and by the Government of Canada²²⁵.

This calls for new global regulation and collective governance of the orbital domain and outer space beyond, that goes beyond the mere voluntary but very recent *Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities*, developed by the Committee, but which are “not legally binding under international law”, as the Guidelines admit²²⁶.

This is not only a matter of establishing common principles and standards for regulating orbital activities of national space agencies, but also the corporate sector²²⁷. One company, Space X, has launched over 3,580 satellites into orbit. Elon Musk’s Starlink project, owned by his SpaceX, is also highly controversial, and former NATO Secretary-General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen posted his concern on Facebook on 19 April 2021, drawing attention to an article in the Wall Street Journal criticising Starlink’s *growing monopoly power*, with 12,000 satellites already planned, and permission for another 30,000 sought²²⁸. Starlink’s latest policy on avoiding “*weaponisation*”, but thereby hampering Ukraine’s defence capabilities, has brought even more controversy²²⁹. In addition, the scope for catastrophic terrestrial consequences of accidents by space junk is growing rapidly. The past seven years have also seen an exponential growth in unidentified orbiting debris, in addition to rocket and payload-related debris, as tracked by the *European Space Agency* (ESA)²³⁰.

Starlink’s contempt for ESA’s safety concerns has already been noted. Two years ago it already had over 1,300 satellites in low orbit, adding 120 more each month, and its ambition if realised will exceed the total number of satellites launched since the 1950s, i.e. over 9,000. A year ago, a solar storm sent 40 of its Starlink satellites plunging back to Earth²³¹. The lack of global regulation means that such private companies can seize all

²²⁵ See in particular the CIGI essay by Wesley Wark: *The Five Eyes and Space: a New Frontier for an Old Intelligence Alliance*, Centre for International Governance Innovation, 29 January 2023, Ontario, Canada, 29 January 2023 [<https://www.cigionline.org/articles/the-five-eyes-and-space-a-new-frontier-for-an-old-intelligence-alliance/>]

²²⁶ *Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities*, Conference paper by the Working Group on the *Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities*, A/AC.105/2018/CRP.20, 27 June 2018. These UNOOSA guidelines were later welcomed by the UN General Assembly. [https://www.unoosa.org/res/oosadoc/data/documents/2018/aac_1052018crp/aac_1052018crp_20_0_html/AC105_2018_CRP20E.pdf]

²²⁷ Kluth, Andreas. *Space Junk is Our New Tragedy of The Commons*, published online by Bloomberg, 17 April 2021 [<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-04-17/space-junk-like-overfishing-and-pollution-is-a-global-tragedy-of-the-commons>]. See the daunting graph in this article.

²²⁸ Pancevski, Bojan. *Elon Musk’s Satellite Internet Project is Too Risky, Rivals Say*, Wall Street Journal online, 19 April 2021. [https://www.wsj.com/articles/elon-musks-satellite-internet-project-is-too-risky-rivals-say-11618827368?st=vo7jsed02hcvrgm&reflink=article_whatsapp_share&fbclid=IwAR2geZ_4qPHqWV8u_6EcDW-sro9ecXoMolLrpeJo4wwHk617dIVdkYugGk]

²²⁹ Hetzner, Christian. *Elon Musk insists he’s restricting Ukraine’s access to Starlink because Zelensky could start World War III*, Fortune Magazine, 13 February 2023 [<https://fortune.com/2023/02/13/elon-musk-spacex-starlink-satellites-world-war-3-ukraine-russia/>]

²³⁰ ESA’s website is particularly insightful: [https://www.esa.int/Space_Safety/Space_Debris/About_space_debris]

²³¹ Morrison, Sara. *SpaceX and our space junk problem*. Vox online. [<https://www.vox.com/recode/22937555/spacex-moon-space-junk>]

orbital space and exercise exclusion, in fact Starlink’s potential for predatory exclusion is a serious threat to world peace, and has been inadequately handled by the US Federal Communications Commission. The UN must act quickly to introduce *an Outer Space equivalent* to the International Seabed Authority. The proliferation of satellites in their tens of thousands by Amazon, OneWeb, Telesat, Boeing, Viasat, in addition to the ESA, US Space Command and Russian and Chinese ambitions, warrant great urgency.

The multilateral obligation to regulate

For these issues of the *Global Commons*, therefore, there are four important aspects to address: (i) the need to develop a *global legal framework* or convention on the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, their rights and responsibilities, with an obligatory code of conduct; and (ii) to adopt *global and national regulation of competition*, to prevent market concentration and state/regulatory capture; and both of these regardless the national, international or planetary nature of the domains exploited; (iii) to develop *effective global enforcement mechanisms* for all these global domains; (iv) to introduce an *effective and equitable global taxation* regime appropriate to the sustainable management of these global domains.

However, a principal obstacle is likely to be continuing influential nationalist lobbies, such as the reactionary Heritage Foundation in the USA, which regards such measures as “*threats that undermine the interests and sovereignty of the American people*”, completely ignoring growing global inter-dependence, and the leverage that the USA could gain with its rivals, such as China, Russia, and others by ratifying and upholding new global standards²³². In fact, sovereignty is increasingly relativised if not shared in this post-Westphalian era of “*decline*” of the West, and given the growing “*pivot to Asia*”, i.e. with the rise of China, America – and the European Union - may have little choice but to bolster multilateralism in such ways as advance *new global standards with obligatory treaty enforcement mechanisms*, and sufficient resources to do so.

V.4. UN Reform

United Peoples and Civil Society

We often think of the UN only as governments, as a bureaucratic structure, but within the UN system, there are some entities which are much *more inclusive*. Some indeed pre-date the UN system of which they later formed part: the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was founded in 1865 to facilitate international connectivity in communications networks. Today, ITU's global membership includes 193 Member States (plenipotentiary) as well as some 900 non-voting “*sector members*”, being companies, universities, and international and regional organizations. In another example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has a *tripartite structure*: governments, trade unions, and employers, and they all come into play in terms of the decision-making processes. The UN Centre for Human Settlements, also known as Habitat, (now the UN Human Settlements Programme), when it held some of its global conferences like twenty-six years ago in Istanbul, brought together *an assembly of cities with municipalities being a lower level of consultation than national governments*. So there are examples already in existence within the UN system as to how we can be more inclusive, but what we lack

²³² Groves, Steve. *Key Treaties That Threaten American Sovereignty Which the Senate Must Oppose During the Biden Presidency*, an issue brief no. 6045 published by The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., January 28, 2021 [<https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/IB6045.pdf>]

is a *chamber of representatives of civil society* or a *chamber of representatives* for that matter of the *corporate sector*, although the *World Economic Forum* in Davos tends to play some kind of a role like that. The relatively recent *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* is a good example of *multi-stakeholder* organisation comprised of governments, corporations and civil society representatives.

The questioning of the UN's *fitness-for-purpose* goes back decades. The Brazilian diplomat Fonseca Pimental laid out some suggestions for bringing the UN towards some form of world government in his monograph on the subject forty-four years ago, but pointing out that peace and development without disarmament would be well-nigh impossible²³³. Avoiding nuclear holocaust requires systemic global disarmament, he argued, "*for wars, once prepared for, tend almost invariably to be unleashed, as almost six thousand years of written history have shown clearly enough*". Developing countries competing in the arms race consume the GDP needed to secure their development. He suggested it is almost impossible to have a really new international economic order without a *new international political order* through a democratic world government. He suggested that the concept of national sovereignty must be reinterpreted along the lines of (what later became) the European Union. He added that the cradle had to be the UN, whose Charter already required revision even without any pretence to world government. He hoped the UN would launch a campaign to establish a democratic world government by the year 2000 "*thus vindicating the warning of Bertrand Russell, the proposal of Einstein and Sakharov and the forecast of Kahn and Wiener*". It would render empire and neo-colonialism obsolete, indeed impossible.

Amartya Sen was more sceptical on the matter of a world government, but less so on the prospect of *some form of global democracy*. He was much in favour of widespread public discussion on global problems, involving work by citizens' organizations, NGOs, and independent media: "*This is part of the way global democracy is already being initiated, without waiting for some gigantic global state to emerge in a fully institutionalized form*". He hoped that a global sense of belonging could flourish in tandem with national and local loyalties. Most of all, *civil society* must resist the miniaturisation of human beings, as much as their *instrumentalization*²³⁴.

Richard Falk also made the case for the complementary emergence of global civil society in his book on world order over thirty years ago²³⁵. Decades later, we are still without any revision of the UN Charter since 1971. Because of the growing disparities between and within countries, and rising inequality, that underpins a lot of the problems we have, and therefore to overcome these things, we need to have *greater inclusive, participatory decision-making processes*, which were espoused by all members states of the United Nations in the *Millennium Declaration* twenty three years ago. So there is fertile ground for making systems and structures more inclusive, in fact we cannot *but* do it. And as we are part of a wider ecosystem of the natural world, unless we begin to respect it more, we doom ourselves, and not just the species that are falling extinct rapidly at the moment.

²³³ Fonseca Pimental, A. *Democratic World Government and the United Nations*, Escopo Editoria, Brasília, 1979.

²³⁴ Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence - The Illusion of Destiny*, W.W. Norton & Company, London & New York, 2006 [ISBN-13: 978-0-393-06007-2]

²³⁵ Falk, Richard. *Explorations at the Edge of Time – The Prospects for World Order*, Temple University Press & United Nations University Press, Philadelphia and Tokyo, 1992 [ISBN 0-87722-680-4]

Inclusive participation - reforms and reversals

Now, for the question of the UN reforms. The UN has undergone many episodic reforms over the decades that most people are unaware of, probably because they only look at the UN Security Council and see what has *not* been reformed. But many other institutional aspects have been reformed, at the global system level. The former *Administrative Committee on Coordination*, comprised of the heads of all UN bodies and affiliated agencies, is now the *Chief Executives Board*, working differently.

To talk about *aspirations*, we had the *UN Charter* back in 1945, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, and then there was something extraordinarily important that happened about 23 years ago, when all UN member states unanimously adopted what was called the previously-mentioned *Millennium Declaration*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 55/2, with a host of targets and things that needed to be done²³⁶. It was a unique document, it went way beyond what the UN Charter talks about, and it was much more specific about things like *civil society*, *the right to civic participation in political decision making*, and *the right to democracy* itself.

The consenting member states also resolved to work collectively for *more inclusive* political processes, allowing *genuine participation by all citizens* in all countries, and to *ensure the freedom of the media* to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have *access to information*. All countries adopted this, *including its call for all countries to sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, to ensure *compliance by Member States with the decisions of the International Court of Justice*, to *eliminate nuclear weapons*, and to *subject sanctions regimes to regular reviews* and to eliminate the adverse effects of sanctions on third parties.

But the institutional and political targets were blown away in the aftermath of the 9/11 “*war against terror*” which unleashed military interventions *without UN Security Council remit*, destruction far more widespread in Afghanistan and Iraq than what terrorists had achieved, a pre-pandemic *rolling back of civic freedoms* across much of the world, and a *massive increase in security expenditures and surveillance everywhere*. It also tore the focus away from the multilateral financing of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) and indeed from systematic implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

An important part of the Millennium Declaration were the 8 Millennium Development Goals. The world made some progress to achieve these by 2015, when the goals were broadened and reformulated as 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), in the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”²³⁷. And of these sustainable development goals although it says “*development*”, the international community *managed to stretch the definition* of development, to make it a little bit more political in terms of *human rights issues, fundamental freedoms, political participation issues, accountable institutional building, and capacity-building*. That this was endorsed by the UN member states at the time was a positive achievement, because otherwise if it was considered too political and looked at “*governance*”, at least some of the “*Group of 77*” countries (who consist of 134 countries today, a majority of UN members), i.e. the old Non-Aligned Movement,

²³⁶ On the Millennium Declaration: [<https://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/millennium.shtml>]
See the actual declaration: [<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/united-nations-millennium-declaration>]

²³⁷ Sustainable Development Goals: [<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>] the same in Russian: [<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ru/>]

would have been against it, suspecting a back-door to Western interference in the “domestic affairs” of their sovereign states. The targets for SDG number 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” are particularly important for civic education, human rights, and good governance.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals takes place at country level by the combined efforts of government, civil society and the private sector. In most of the countries that require assistance from the United Nations to do that, the local UN agencies are now increasingly coordinated by a country-based UN *Resident Coordinator*. This is a very important internal structural reform but it is an improvement in the way of doing business more than anything else, although there is some evidence of certain agencies persisting in efforts to compete with each other and indeed to undermine the coordination efforts of the Resident Coordinator. It may be time the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called such agencies to account through the *Chief Executives’ Board*.

From new stakeholders to new constituencies,

The Secretary-General’s report of September 2021 on *Our Common Agenda* does call for stronger governance of key issues of global concern, but is minimalistic in transformative vision, and thin on structural reforms. It is now planned to hold a *Summit of the Future* in 2024, preceded by a *Summit on the SDGs* in 2023, and to advance ideas for governance arrangements in global public goods or the global commons, but this may not be enough.

In his own follow-up, the Secretary-General appointed a *High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism* in March 2022, but this has been a slow-moving exercise²³⁸. Nonetheless it lately issued its six “*transformational shifts*” in global governance²³⁹. It does not, for example, build on the exhortations of the late former Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali, ailing at the time, as he addressed those gathered at the 3rd annual Global Baku Forum²⁴⁰ in April 2015 and spoke of the UN as an old institution in a changing world: “*we need to adapt to drastic change and new technologies. The UN is made of member states, but in today’s world, states are no longer the only players and a new world order needs to factor this in*”. Civil society organisations as well as corporate giants and digital media represent new forces which require structural change in global governance, not just process-inclusiveness. Much like Fonseca Pimental almost forty five years ago, even Collier pointed out the need for government above the level of the nation state, pointing out over a decade ago the *declining ability of governments to cooperate*²⁴¹. In this regard, the aspirations and claims of civil society globally today are increasingly formulated more explicitly in the language of *human rights* because awareness of the dignity of every human person has become a common acquisition - except by brutal dictatorships. More and more people worldwide realise they not only have a stake in national and global governance but can also play an active role. Citizen awareness is

²³⁸ The UN Secretary-General’s *High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism*:

[\[https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/\]](https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/)

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2022-03-18/note-correspondents-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-high-level-advisory-board-effective-multilateralism-comprises-12-eminent-current-or-former-global-leaders-officials>

²³⁹ *Fifth Statement by the Co-Chairs of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism*

[\[https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/fifth-statement-by-the-co-chairs-six-transformational-shifts/\]](https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/fifth-statement-by-the-co-chairs-six-transformational-shifts/)

²⁴⁰ Hosted annually by Azerbaijan’s Nizami Ganjavi International Center, the 3rd GBF aimed to build trust in the emerging new world order, in the aftermath of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2014.

²⁴¹ Collier, Paul. *The Plundered Planet - How to Reconcile Prosperity with Nature*, Allen Lane – an imprint of Penguin Books, 2010 [ISBN: 978-1-846-14223-9].

growing exponentially, despite some autocratic cases of so-called security measures, social media repression, or outright full-spectrum surveillance. Only by acting collectively, and individually-contributing, can we limit the *unhealthy concentration of power* in the world, whether political, economic, corporate, or cultural. *Apex power must be transparent and held accountable*, democratically. Not only consumer power and social media, but also anti-authoritarian and non-violent *civic activism will continue to mobilise and make the voices of people heard*²⁴². Protests and discourse of various dissidents or activists (such as Sakharov, Havel, Walesa, Sharp, Popovic, Tsikhanouskaya, Navalny, Thunberg, et al.) arguing against tyranny and irresponsible power, sometimes even from unjust imprisonment, continue to inspire younger people, and in some cases, hard-copy *samizdat* will be the means of ‘*clandestine*’ dissemination.

There are critical tipping points where quantum or *paradigmatic change* may be required to avoid catastrophe –one could argue, such a time is yet again, now. The number of IDPs and refugees in the world now exceeds 100 million – for the first time on record – over 1% of humanity, and growing fast²⁴³. If displacees from natural disasters are included and those fleeing Ukraine, the figure is 120 million – as many as all of Egypt, Ethiopia or the Philippines. The World Bank also estimates that 216 million people could be forced to move internally by 2050 due to climate inaction²⁴⁴. The United Nations *now rests perilously on the edge of its own irrelevance & oblivion*, as Ukraine’s President Zelensky rightly cajoled. The UN is inspired by the humanity of those we failed, to never repeat the scourges of war, but it is *only credible if it acts morally* to save the living. To do even this most effectively requires systemic, institutional, ethical and Charter change.

One amongst many reform initiatives is the campaign “*We The Peoples*” launched by *Democracy International* – a global coalition which calls for a more inclusive reform of the United Nations. The campaign already has more than 220 global civic organisations behind it²⁴⁵. It calls for a UN *World Citizens’ Initiative*, an instrument that would allow citizens’ to put items on the Agenda of the UN; a UN *Parliamentary Assembly*, which would give citizens a say in who represents them at the UN; and the creation of a UN *Civil Society Envoy office*, which would strengthen involvement of NGOs at the UN, beyond the accreditation already possible at ECOSOC. The call has been joined by CSOs from around the world, including Avaaz, Greenpeace, ActionAid and the Nature Conservancy.

²⁴² Sharp, Gene. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle – 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (with Joshua Paulson), published by Extending Horizons Books, an imprint of Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., Boston, 2005 [ISBN: 978-0-87558-162-0]. His work has had a huge influence on velvet revolutions. See also: Popovic, Srdja. *Nonviolent Struggle – 50 Crucial Points – A Strategy Approach to Everyday Tactics* (with Andrej Milivojevic and Slobodan DjinoVIC), published by the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), Belgrade 2007 [ISBN: 978-86-908997-2-2]. Chomsky remains an irritant to those wallowing in impune power; see: Chomsky, Noam. *Occupy*, published by Penguin Books, 2012 [ISBN: 978-0-241-96401-9].

²⁴³ On IDPs scale, see the IDMC report for 2021: [<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>] Figures subsequent to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine are now substantially higher. On refugees: see UNHCR:

[<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/5/628a389e4/unhcr-ukraine-other-conflicts-push-forcibly-displaced-total-100-million.html>]

²⁴⁴ Statement by the President of the General Assembly to an informal plenary meeting on IDPs, 20 February 2023: [<https://www.un.org/pga/77/2023/02/20/pga-remarks-to-informal-plenary-meeting-to-hear-a-briefing-from-robert-piper-special-adviser-of-the-secretary-general-on-solutions-to-internal-displacement/>]

²⁴⁵ [<https://www.wethepeoples.org/supporters/>]

A similar approach would establish a UN *Parliamentary Network* as a first step to introducing a more representative citizen-based dimension to the UN General Assembly, addressing the current and apparent democracy and legitimacy deficits and serve as a direct platform for input from citizens' directly elected representatives²⁴⁶. As proposed by the *Albright-Gambari Commission*, it would function as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly. Already, the President of the UN General Assembly has worked with the President of the Interparliamentary Union to bring about *Annual Parliamentary Hearings* at the UN, partly to bridge the gap between ideas at the global and the national levels and help turn UN resolutions and decisions into national legislation, following a resolution of the UN General Assembly adopted last December 2022 to highlight the parliamentary role in advancing the SDGs²⁴⁷. The UN has lagged far behind in this, without a formal structure to draw on existing international parliamentary networks. In favour of such, it is argued that regional governance institutions with parliamentary structures including the European Union, the African Union, ECOWAS, and Mercosur should be considered as possible models.

Multidimensional polyvalence for global resilience

These and related phenomena demand *a new approach to multilateralism that is inclusive of legitimate actors*, and that excludes the illegitimate and criminal through a globally-networked rule of law, with *a new constellation of enforcement agencies* that respect human rights and rights to privacy and avoid the intrusion of surveillance technologies that undermine personal dignity and empower obscure forms of tyranny. While huge progress continues on multiple tracks through new treaties and conventions in various fields, major global paroxysms that turn human progress backwards must be avoided. From this perspective, two initiatives are worth mentioning: (a) the *Foresight Network* of the High-Level Committee on Programmes, under the UN system's Chief Executives Board, to promote and support strategic foresight capacities across the UN system²⁴⁸; and (b) the report of the Millennium Project to the Secretary-General, recommending *five foresight elements* of *Our Common Agenda*, including most notably a *UN Futures Lab*, and the re-purposing of the Trusteeship Council as a *Multi-Stakeholder Foresight Body*²⁴⁹. The UN Futures Lab is deemed "*critical, urgent, and essential to do it as soon as possible*" for creating a global collective intelligence system.

Such a global collective intelligence system should enable humanity to address the global civilizational crisis endured right now - and for which *we need a new worldwide fabric of resilience*. The only way to go is forward, together, with a greater focus on *human*, as distinct from, but in addition to, *state* security. This is what lies behind the proposal for a *Global Resilience Council*, promoted by the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS) as part of an overall reform of the United Nations²⁵⁰. Combined

²⁴⁶ Petcu, Cristina. *Create a UN Parliamentary Network as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly*, UN Policy memo no. 4, December 2019. See: [<https://www.stimson.org/2020/create-a-un-parliamentary-network-as-an-advisory-body-to-the-un-general-assembly/>]

²⁴⁷ Statement of the President of the UN General Assembly at the *Annual Parliamentary Meeting* of the United Nations, 13 February 2023: [<https://www.un.org/pga/77/2023/02/13/pga-remarks-to-2023-annual-parliamentary-hearing/>]

²⁴⁸ Foresight Network: [<https://unsceb.org/foresight-network/>]

²⁴⁹ *Five Foresight Elements of Our Common Agenda – Results of a Real-Time Delphi Study*, The Millennium Project, September 2022. A contribution to the Summit on the Future, 2024, and <https://millennium-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/UN-Foresight-Elements-report.pdf>

²⁵⁰ The *Global Resilience Council*: a security forum for non-military threats, promoted by the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability: [<https://www.foggs.org/grc-global-resilience-council/>]

the above foresight capabilities, and with the *Resilience Agenda* put together by the World Economic Forum and McKinsey (p. 26 above), this could be part of a new *global resilience architecture*, adjoined by an MCDA agenda of *humanitarian conversion of existing excessive military infrastructure* (see page 8 above), in tandem with a robust return to disarmament, demilitarisation, and progressive abolition of nuclear weapons with a reformed and inclusive global security order. This requires, not least, reform of the UN Security Council.

Security Council

Therefore, an equally-important, and more crucial, issue in terms of a bigger *structural* reform of the UN has to do with the UN Security Council. On this question of the Security Council, it is a framework, best thought of as a *chamber* for basically five principal countries, the veto-wielding permanent members, one-time allies/victors in WW2, to agree. It is really no more than that, *archaic and unrepresentative* – they have mostly become nuclear powers since, but they are no longer the only ones. When they agree, it empowers them collectively to impose their will on the rest of us. And it is only really useful when these five agree. The *veto*, prompted initially by the USA as its own exclusive right, for which Stalin demanded reciprocity, followed by the other three, was wrongly designed from the beginning to enable a single spoiler to obstruct global peace and security, and to block solutions to regional problems. It alone is not fit for today’s world.

The Security Council was never fit, not even at its foundation – it was a compromise between imperial powers, including the USSR, biased by veto against the majority – *inherently undemocratic*, and like most of its members (where) democracy over the past fifteen years is in decline. That needs to be corrected, and one of the corrections would be to change the nature of the veto, abolish it ideally or subject it to some kind of a “*qualified majority*” veto of three of the P5 (Permanent Five veto-wielders), or two plus others, but it is very difficult to ask someone with power to give it up. It rarely happens (voluntarily) in human society. The other challenge is to *expand the Council* from the current fifteen members to twenty-two or twenty-five, and importantly to get India, the world’s largest democracy, in as a permanent member, with or without a veto. Originally designed in 1945 with the five permanent members and six elected ones, it was reformed in 1963 to the present fifteen members in new regional blocs due to pressure from the Non-Aligned Movement²⁵¹. But some existing P5 veto powers have difficulty accepting regional rivals as new permanent members. Perhaps a radical solution would be to include regional organisations, such as the African Union, the Arab League, ASEAN, the OAS and the European Union²⁵². There seems to be a large majority of the powerful member states being in favour of bringing India into the fold, so that would be one step, but a very small step in the much larger picture of reforms that we need to pursue.

It is important to understand that to reform the UN Security Council there is a two-stage process: (a) it requires to have a 128 member states - out of a 193 – to agree on what those reforms will be, and that’s very difficult to obtain, i.e. the UN General Assembly has to ratify it by two thirds, and then (b) it needs to be ratified by parliaments of two

²⁵¹ UN General Assembly resolution 1991, amended the Charter increasing the number of non-permanent seats to eleven from six and dividing the seats up into geographic regions, through which states would compete in elections.

²⁵² President Macron of France advanced the notion of “*European Sovereignty*”; see the Western European Union’s absorption into the EU: [<https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/mav/183/ROBERT/64731>]

thirds of the member states. Only then can the Council be reformed. It is easier to reform the EU than it is to reform the UN Security Council. But we will get there eventually.

Over the decades, there were many studies done about how to advance various systemic reforms to global governance, with special global commissions producing key reports and recommendations that led to global UN summits on the environment, health, education, women's rights, etc. as well as Nordic and other studies on UN System reform including of the Security Council. In 1993 they started an intensive process, and over a decade ago they made another impetus, but led by Afghanistan, Libya, and Italy - they didn't get very far with that, and two of those are not quite what they were. However, Italy is now optimistic that progress can be made on its version of "*Uniting for Consensus*"²⁵³.

The progress made was reflected in a document called "*Revised Elements of Commonality and Issues for Further Consideration - On the question of the equitable representation and increase of the membership in the Security Council and related matters*"²⁵⁴. This came out in 2018, and was a good summary to date. Its final version was circulated by the President of the UN General Assembly on 7 June 2019, with intention to subsequently circulate a draft decision for adoption by the General Assembly in due course, urging a *comprehensive reform of the Security Council*. The pandemic delayed progress.

Progress during later intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) was reflected in the letter dated 16 May 2022 from the IGN Co-Chairs, and in the document entitled "*Co-Chairs' Revised Elements Paper on Convergences and Divergences on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters*"²⁵⁵. Yet, during the High-Level Segment of the 77th General Assembly in September 2022, only one third of world leaders highlighted the need for Security Council reform – despite the sclerosis of the Council brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and use of its veto. Further IGN negotiations in informal plenary later during the 77th session. The concluding debate of the 77th session indicated wide support for enlargement of non-permanent and permanent members and for abolishing the veto, especially in instances of mass atrocities, rejected however by Russia²⁵⁶. In any case, there is now more of an effort being made, stimulated by Russia's egregious violation of the Charter and abuse of its veto, and its refusal to comply with no less than six UN General Assembly resolutions passed in the first year since it again invaded Ukraine²⁵⁷.

²⁵³ According to Maurizio Massari, Italy's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York: see Dulcie Leimbach's report in Passblue, 14 February 2023: [<https://www.passblue.com/2023/02/14/italy-is-hopeful-about-un-reform-as-long-as-its-proposal-leads-the-way/>]

²⁵⁴ [<https://www.un.org/pga/73/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2019/05/07.05.19-Revised-Elements-of-Commonality-paper.pdf>]

²⁵⁵ [<https://www.un.org/pga/76/2022/05/18/letter-from-the-president-of-the-general-assembly-ign-co-chairs-letter/>]

²⁵⁶ [<https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12473.doc.htm>]

²⁵⁷ These are General Assembly resolutions of the 11th Emergency Special Session on the war against Ukraine, and obligations imposed on Russia for its multiple violations: A/RES/ES-11/1 (2 March 2022): *Aggression against Ukraine*; A/RES/ES-11/2 (24 March 2022): *Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine*; A/RES/ES-11/3 (7 April 2022): *Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council*; A/RES/ES-11/4 (13 October 2022): *Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations*; AS/RES/ES-11/5 (14 November 2022): *Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine*; A/RES/ES-11/6 (23 February 2023): *Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine*.

The dysfunctionality of the Council after twelve months of Russia's war against Ukraine has been lamented by the President of the General Assembly, in that "*not a single Council resolution has been adopted to mitigate the exact type of crisis the UN was created to prevent*".

In advance of the next 78th General Assembly in late 2023, a number of position papers on convergences and divergences have also emerged. The G4 observed in January that the IGNS members "*had been meeting in this informal format for 15 years now, with nothing concrete to show*"²⁵⁸; and in March urged giving civil society a voice to achieve more informed and inclusive decision-making in the Council²⁵⁹. But Russia, whose mendacious statements initially denying intention to invade, denying atrocities and war crimes (now estimated at over 70,000 documented), denying Wagner PMC involvement, and making demonstrably false statements about Ukraine, NATO, the West, etc., has rejected "*attempts to change the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations and other international organizations, artificially bolstering non-governmental actors that often have non-transparent agendas*" in its concept note for the Security Council session on "*effective multilateralism*"²⁶⁰. The subsequent debate in the Council on the subject, ironically presided by Russia on the *International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace*, 24 April 2023, reveals the extent to which Russia itself has lost credibility if not legitimacy as a permanent veto-wielding member of the Security Council²⁶¹.

The principal issues reviewed for the reform the UN Security Council have been: the *categories of membership, the regional representation, the use of the veto, the working methods, and also the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly*. The criteria being applied were that it should be transparent, accountable, representative, democratic, and accessible for members. The big issue is *regional representation*, as there was a longstanding debate as to whether the European Union and/or others mentioned above should have a seat, but so far all seats have to be sovereign states, the view being against any *non-state* actor to be a member. With membership criteria, there is also the issue of *permanent* status, looking at the size of a country, its population, its economy, its support to the UN budget and its participation in peacekeeping operations. African countries are particularly vocal that they want to have at least three seats on the Security Council. Considering much of the business of the Security Council has focused on African security problems, this seems understandable. Hence, there are various things being looked at – whether the veto should be abolished, whether it should only be operable if at least two permanent members of the P5 support it, and not just one. Whether it should require two or three *non-permanent* members to

²⁵⁸ G4 Statement at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on "*the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council*", 26 January 2023 [<https://new-york-un.diplo.de/un-en/-/2576566>]

²⁵⁹ Joint Statement of the G4 (Brazil, Germany, India, Japan), *Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform*, 9 March 2023 [<https://new-york-un.diplo.de/un-en/-/2586916>]

²⁶⁰ *Concept note for the Security Council open debate on maintenance of international peace and security: effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations* (Annex to the letter dated 3 April 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General); S/2023/244, 4 April 2023.

²⁶¹ *Amid Strained Multilateral System, States Must Recommit to United Nations Charter Obligations, Prioritize Human Rights, Secretary-General Tells Security Council - Many Delegates Note Organ's Composition Incompatible with Geopolitical Realities*, 9308th Meeting, SC/15263, 24 April 2023 [<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15263.doc.htm>]

also support the implementation of the veto. The veto is perhaps the most controversial aspect, because a lot of members, probably most, believe that the veto should not be exercised by any P5 members, if those countries are *directly* involved, or in the case of mass atrocities. So, in other words, if country X invades country Y, it should not be able to exercise the veto in that regard.

Whilst a few countries have on occasion violated provisions of the UN Charter, or human rights law, or the conventions and laws of war, or even UN Security Resolutions (e.g. on the Palestinian issue), in recent years, Russia has continually violated the *UN Charter*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Geneva Conventions* and multiple *UN General Assembly resolutions* passed against its aggression on Ukraine in 2022. Most importantly, it is argued that Russia *cannot legitimately veto* any UN Security Council resolution *on a dispute to which it is party*, i.e. it cannot veto UNSC action on its invasion of Ukraine, according to UN Charter Article 27.3, depending on how that is interpreted. It is time for the world to stop ignoring that prohibition or interpreting it so narrowly as to enable *rogue impunity* through global inertia. An excellent summary of the dilemmas the Council faced over the past 12 months was prepared for the online forum *Just Security*²⁶². While it has been argued that the obligation to abstain from exercising the veto under Article 27.3 only relates to Chapter VI and Art. 52. 3 of Chapter VIII, and not to Chapter VII, it has to be equally argued that Russia did *not* respect Art. 33 of Chapter VI, neither prior to its aggression in 2014 nor since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022; nor did it respect Art.37, i.e. it did not seek peaceful resolution for its alleged “*grievances*” through recourse to the international instruments established to prevent violent conflict, and indeed the *scourge of war*. The UN Security Council also failed to refer the dispute to a regional mechanism such as the OSCE under Art. 5 of Chapter VIII.

By the way, as many member states have lately observed, despite the huge increase in their number through decolonization and later dissolution of the USSR (and Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the hiving off of Eritrea and Southern Sudan from Ethiopia and Sudan respectively), the UN Charter (let alone the Security Council) has not been revised since 1971. *Ergo*, Article 27.3 should be re-interpreted, without holding world peace hostage to a comprehensive UN reform. On the latter, there is no comprehensive agreement, except perhaps on two things at the moment. There is an agreement to *expand the membership of the Security Council in the non-permanent membership category*, and it is probably going to be an agreement to expand it from the existing 15 total membership to something between 22 to 27 members. That agreement seems to hold across the board.

The second agreement is that *of those countries that become permanent members without a veto, India is widely accepted as a candidate country to be permanent*. And then one can look at the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), i.e. whether Brazil should be a member, or whether and which African country ... and we don't have closure on those issues. So that's essentially where the UN Security Council issue stands at the moment, and this continuing relative stagnation continues to undermine not only its legitimacy, but also the overall credibility of the UN system and the current so-called *rules-based global order* based on the UN Charter.

²⁶² Saad, Rodrigo. *The United Nations in Hindsight: The Security Council, One Year after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, Just Security Masthead, 31 January 2023 [<https://www.justsecurity.org/84952/the-united-nations-in-hindsight-the-security-council-one-year-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/>]

More recently, and with the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the EU is left with just one member sitting amongst the Big P-5, namely France, and some demands are now being made for Germany to be a permanent member, along with India, Japan and Brazil, objected to however by various rivals in their regions²⁶³.

Movement on some of the key issues is expected in 2023 at the UN General Assembly²⁶⁴. But it is a continuing process. The UN will never be perfect, because we live in a world of flux, but we must continually struggle to change it, reform it, make it more inclusive, and make it more effective. One of the key issues is resourcing the UN. Some countries have been consistently depriving it of resources, and obstructing its ability even to carry out peacekeeping operations. That has to change, and hopefully, it will.

V.5. Citizen activism and multilateralism

Emerging global civil society

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) or civil society organisation (CSO) can officially register for consultative status with the UN's *Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC), and at the moment there are over 4,000 registered from across the world and thus their voice can be heard in UN circles, even if they are not ultimately responsible for ECOSOC decisions or resolutions. Perhaps we need more than that, as member states may realize, due to the growing pressures of civil society and the advent of social and digital media, that *decisions need to be more inclusive and cohesive*.

Over thirty years ago at the UN *Conference on Environment and Development* in Rio de Janeiro, civil society groups congregated from all over the globe in 1992 to share their visions of a better world. David Korten described it as “*the most diverse gathering of its size ever held on our planet*” and held that it was “*the first visible manifestation of the emergence of a global civil society. Yet the experience suggested something even deeper—the emergence of a planetary consciousness without precedent in the human experience*”²⁶⁵. For many this also had a profound philosophical or spiritual significance. Since then, with the Internet and social media flourishing today, these civil society movements interact instantly across the world and foster energy, ideas, and action for global campaigns. As Korten puts it, “*Much as capitalism uses the power of secrecy, centralized authority, and massive financing to champion the cause of money, a globalizing civil society is using the power of openness, voluntary commitment, and the ability to self-organize everywhere at once to champion the cause of life*”. Yet, this growing civic activism has been an irritation to many in the corporate sector who would rather escape public scrutiny, or worse, conceal the truth of the operations and interests. A similar concern has also been manifested by some governments, for much the same reasons, leading in some cases to security phobias or reactionary repression.

²⁶³ See Peter Pindjak's article “*Time for the European Union to reassert itself in the UN Security Council*”, Atlantic Council, 9 March 2020: [<https://atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/time-for-the-european-union-to-reassert-itself-in-the-un-security-council/>]

²⁶⁴ Leopold, Evelyn. *Will UN reform happen this year – Don't hold your breath*, Passblue, New York, 30 January 2023 [<https://www.passblue.com/2023/01/30/will-un-reform-happen-this-year-dont-hold-your-breath/>]

²⁶⁵ Korten, David. *The Post-Corporate World – Life After Capitalism*, Kumarian Press, Inc. an imprint of Berret-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 1999 [ISBN: 1-57675-051-5] (p.279).

Coherence requires conflict resolution

Yet while civil society is becoming *truly globalised*, there has also been a lack of focus on identity groups and the psychological aspects of conflict. The traditional ‘*threat and deterrence*’ approach (based on state interests and balance of power) breeds its own quandaries. It has been said that *the realist paradigm does not properly either describe or explain the world*²⁶⁶. There is a need to close the gap between theory and practice. Unfortunately, the partial breakdown in international relations currently prevailing points to the *inadequacy of investment in conflict resolution capacities* by governments. Leaders in capacity development for facilitation, mediation and negotiation are today more likely to be found in civil society and academia, rather than in national governmental institutions. Consortia such as *Nonviolent Peaceforce* have become pioneers at community level, including in local peace agreements as in Mindanao in the Philippines, applying the concept of *Unarmed Civilian Protection*²⁶⁷.

We have too many anomalies, and as Kuhn put it, regarding science, “*the profession can no longer evade anomalies*”²⁶⁸. Today we are facing a world of *increasing disorder* – there is no world government, and the UN is weak. The primacy of states, and the weakness of the enforcement capabilities of the UN, especially the UN Security Council’s dysfunctionality, foster competition, rivalry and disputes between states, being subject to “*state capture*” by vested interests and as long as the corpus of international law does not develop in tandem with the emergence of globalised *non-state actors*, such as transnational or multinational corporations, civil society, and organised crime, let alone to deal with threats to the global commons. And one of the collateral problems of sanctions policies is that it restricts the scope for effective *Track II diplomacy*.

Resilience needs inclusion

Even so, at the personal level, more and more people worldwide realise they have not only a stake in national and global governance, but that they can also play an active role. *Citizen awareness is growing exponentially*, notwithstanding so-called security measures, restrictions on social media, or outright *full-spectrum* surveillance. To avoid poly-pandemics of disease, poverty, hunger, nationalism, and authoritarian repression, and the domino effect of adverse climate tipping points, *resilience must be built through citizen engagement and institutional reforms, transparency and public accountability*.

In fact the previously mentioned *World Values Survey* noted in a special recent study that the Covid crisis has *boosted progressive values*²⁶⁹. Lockdowns, enforced social isolation and restrictions on personal freedoms increased “*calls for equality, tolerance, rising community spirit and an increasing focus on emancipation and self-determination. Freedoms and liberties have become scarce and as a result progressive values are on the rise while patriarchy and a focus on law and order have gone down. People internationally are calling for inclusive growth and for reducing the gap between rich and the poor*”. There is also an increased focus on health, vitality and the quality of life.

²⁶⁶ Azar, Edward E. & Burton, John W (editors). *International Conflict Resolution – Theory and Practice*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO USA, 1986 [ISBN: 0-7450-0227-7] (p.16).

²⁶⁷ *Unarmed Civilian Protection – Strengthening Civilian Capacities to Protect Civilians Against Violence*, Nonviolent Peaceforce. [https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/wp-content/uploads/archive/UCP_Course_Manual.pdf]

²⁶⁸ Gleick, James. *Chaos – Making a New Science*, published in Cardinal by Sphere Books, a division of MacDonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., a member of Maxwell Pergamon Publishing Corporation, plc., London, 1989 [ISBN: 0-7474-0413-5] (p.314).

²⁶⁹ World Values Survey: [<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSNewsShow.jsp?ID=437>]

Not long ago, it was remarked that the concept of personhood cannot be dissociated from *the power of free choice*, and that every kind of action promoting the human being through culture “*must not forget that the most adequate type of society to reach such a goal is one in which all citizens can participate in government*”²⁷⁰. The challenge therefore for globalised civil society is to be more actively engaged in national and international problem-solving, deploying Track II citizen diplomacy where necessary, and there is no reason why eminent women leaders should not be at the forefront of such efforts.

Diversity demands solidarity

One of the ironies of the modern age is the extent to which *traditional* political elites have become relatively *dis-empowered*. We have an erosion of authority, whether it is religious, scientific in the populist era – or institutional (i.e. political) in some other sense, and part of this has been due to a growing education of the masses (if one speaks in those populist terms), but it is also part of the digital world, that the social media have become empowering of a multitude of diverse views, and sometimes it has been very easy for some to capture that technology and use it to dominate, as with *Cambridge Analytica* or with the 2016 US presidential election of Donald Trump, and so forth, and what we need to try and do is get more social, *corporate social responsibility*, and (inclusive) *political social responsibility* into the centres of power, including the centres of corporate power, in particular the digital media, and we shouldn't have to depend on some IT billionaire to suddenly “see the light” – there should be *instruments that enforce certain types of corporate norms*, in terms of ethics. Our world is a “work-in-progress” – we just hope it doesn't *regress* - we all need to work, together, and find solutions, in common solidarity.

When we look at the European Union, and at the *Copenhagen Criteria*, the *Acquis Communautaire*, and the extent to which European integration remains extremely attractive to the countries on the periphery, it is difficult to understand why some of those more recent entrants, from Romania and Bulgaria, to Poland and Hungary should express such objection to a lot of the things such as approving the EU budget– where Poland and Hungary are particularly sensitive. But part of the whole challenge on the European level is to give more credence to the diversity within the EU member states themselves, the regions, somehow to have peaceful ways of resolving Catalan concerns or Basque concerns, or concerns in Corsica, or Scotland, or Northern Ireland, or wherever it is, and this warrants a regard at some of the ways that existing member states are structured, as many are based on post-Westphalian models of governance. There are an enormous number of monarchies still, be they constitutional or parliamentary, yet democratic. Not every member state of the EU is necessarily a republic, although they may be a *res publicae* in the more traditional Latin sense. So, there are issues that are “works-in-progress” that need to continue to develop internally in Europe and beyond the EU in the Council of Europe. There is much of value in the EU approach to admission and enlargement, the Copenhagen Criteria, fundamental rights and freedoms, and the *acquis communautaire*, from which more *generic templates of regional solidarity* could benefit, e.g. in the Middle East, building on the *Abraham Accords*. In this regard, the writings of Abba Eban, Edward Said, El Hassan Bin Talal, Muhammad Shahrur, and Ismail Serageldin bear study as possible foundations for enhanced dialogue.

²⁷⁰ Jordão, Francisco Vieira. *A Humanism Open to Transcendence*, Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, Lisbon, 2002 [ISBN-13: 978-9728386504]

Another aspect of solidarity is that the question of human rights is fundamental, but we tend to see it from an individualist perspective in the Western world. Yet the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* gave expression to the dignity of the human person *globally*. From an Eastern perspective it has been seen sometimes differently, more in terms of collective identity and community concerns, and one of the things that came about around the time when discussions were taking place in the UN on a “*New International Economic Order*” (1974) – a debate that is now decades old – was the coming into existence of the “*Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States*”, which tried to counterbalance the individualistic Western perspective with something that was a bit more *communitarian*. In this regard, the ethical imperatives contained in the InterAction Council’s *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* could be mainstreamed by the UN General Assembly in the New Agenda for Peace, and in ‘*Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow*’ in 2024.

And again there is the issue of *principle versus transactional*, and in the UN system we find both. We try to uphold the principles underpinning our approach to solutions, but when negotiating compromises, it tends to become more transactional, and that’s probably understood, although it can result in *double standards and global inequity* subsequently a driver of further conflict. Hence, every effort must be made to preserve and *uphold the principles, systematically and consistently avoiding situations of double standards*, not least in order to preserve the legitimacy and integrity of our global institutions and in particular the United Nations.

Missed opportunities justify enhanced multilateralism

If we limit ourselves to a globalist perspective, we could be a bit euphoric about a return of multilateralism, politically. But how about “*money-lateralism*”? A real challenge is to address the *massive disempowerment of the hundreds of millions*, perhaps even billions, of people across the world as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the loss of jobs that have come about, a half-billion in formal employment according to the ILO, and as much as 1.5 billion (loss of income) in terms of the informal sector.

The only way to overcome this is to narrow income gaps through tax reform and economic stimulus packages from the largesse of industrialized countries, including via the Bretton Woods Institutions. A new release of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) would allow the poorest countries to get more favourable treatment than the \$650 billion released by the IMF in August 2021, in particular starting with forgiveness of their existing debt portfolios, rather than simple rescheduling of debt²⁷¹. But the USA has been against a further SDR release, even when interest rates were so extremely low over the past 30 years until recently. For that matter, another looming challenge is to ensure transparent publicly-directed commitment of fresh resources to achieving the SDGs, without diverting further into the arms race the forthcoming taxation bonanza that many countries may reap from the implementation in 2024 of the global agreement for a minimum Effective Tax Rate of 15% to be applied to Multi-National Enterprises, as a result of the OECD-G20 agreement on the Inclusive Framework on base erosion and profit-shifting (BEPS 2.0) of the global anti-base erosion model (GloBE)²⁷².

²⁷¹ Reuters on IMF [<https://www.reuters.com/markets/rates-bonds/imf-should-issue-new-reserves-help-countries-tackle-overlapping-crises-groups-2022-10-06/>]

²⁷² OECD: [<https://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/tax-challenges-arising-from-the-digitalisation-of-the-economy-global-anti-base-erosion-model-rules-pillar-two.htm>]

But even in conventional political *multilateralism*, if one can call it that, major protagonists “*never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity*”, to paraphrase Abba Eban²⁷³. Perhaps the greatest Russian disappointment in recent decades after the end of the Cold War was Yeltsin’s failed attempt in December 1991 to get Russia to join NATO. The negative reaction in the West to his impromptu *démarche* rebounded years later as Yevgeny Primakov became Russia’s foreign minister in 1996, when cooperation with NATO soured and Russian public opinion turned against NATO²⁷⁴. Andrei Kovalev attributes Russia’s later unilateral aggressions under Putin against Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and indeed the interference in Armenian-Azerbaijan disputes over Nagorno-Karabakh, to the failure of the *Belavezha Accords* of 1991 to adequately address and resolve *a single issue* in relations between the post-USSR states that emerged to form the *Commonwealth of Independent States*.

Inability to agree let alone control Russia’s new border areas in Central Asia and the Far East fostered illegal migration, contraband and organised crime, to a degree in Siberia that the Kremlin became increasingly concerned at the influx of Chinese migrants gradually risking overwhelming the local and sparse Russian population²⁷⁵. Such were the dynamics that lost Alaska in the nineteenth century. That a declining Russia has now become the lesser partner in a curious alliance with a growing China puts it ironically in a relationship where only vast size and a politically-unusable nuclear arsenal compensate for an otherwise inferior position. And Xi Jinping knows it. In a telling, even if inadvertent, rebuke to Sergey Lavrov’s Russian presidency of the Security Council on 24 April 2023, and his 7 April statement about future negotiations being based on “*principles on which the new world order will be based*”, China’s ambassador Zhang Jun stated “*The world has only one order*”, with the UN Charter being its “*cornerstone*”²⁷⁶. Another missed opportunity on the Russian side was “*Primakov’s Loop*” when that prime minister, as he had become, ordered his flight over the Atlantic on 24 March 1999, to turn back from his official visit to Washington DC, in protest at the news that NATO had started to bomb Milošević’s rump Yugoslavia²⁷⁷. Had he continued, he might have managed to negotiate an alternative course of events, especially for Serbia.

There are many *networks of world leaders* from politics, civil society and the corporate and media sectors active in the world today adopting celebrity causes. Apart from current national leaders in office, and other global influencers, *these networks can be mobilised* to wield greater influence – but it is perhaps *even more important that they are seen to do so – together*. Acting in concert, they represent a considerable vector of strategic influence for impact, the more so when they combine with broad-based civil society movements, and especially those representing the younger generations, and engage with the current powers-that-be. The following concluding reflections and synthesis of principal issues covered above try to identify how *a convergence of global interests can catalyse the broad momentum for change and achieve a critical mass for global reforms*.

²⁷³ *Op. cit.*, (fn. 188 above, p. 60) Eban famously made this remark in regard to Arab failures to progress in peace talks with Israel. But it could equally apply to current Israeli politics, especially under the current Netanyahu government, and indeed beyond.

²⁷⁴ Kovalev, Andrei A. *Russia’s Dead End – An Insiders Testimony, from Gorbachev to Putin*, Potomac Books (an imprint of University of Nebraska Press), 2017 [ISBN: 978-1612348933] (pp. 123-124).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 120-122. See also pp. 134-135 viz Yakutia and “*China’s claims to 579 square miles of the Far East and Siberia that it considered historically its own*”. Kovalev also describes the prospects of Kaliningrad seceding, let alone Chechnya, or a transfer of the Kuril Islands to Japan.

²⁷⁶ UN News, 24 April 2023: [<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135947#>]

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 161.

VI. Securing a Planetary Civilisation

We have found each other, and found no other home than this Earth from whence we came to personal consciousness, community, and mass extinction. The bell tolls now for us and all others, and calls our collective consciousness to planetary conscience.

- @shasalsio, 30 March 2023

Concluding reflections

There is a case for optimism. On the one hand, current pessimism could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to fear and more unilateralism. Yet, if downside risks are better managed collectively, and catastrophe can be avoided, historians in the future may rightly regard the time-spread of our generation as *the best in history*, the recent pandemic and currently declining HDI and SDGs notwithstanding²⁷⁸. Until the pandemic hit, more and more people everywhere were enjoying better lives than ever before²⁷⁹. That does not mean they realised it or were content – through revolutions in education and information, *expectations have risen faster than inter-generational improvements*. But not only had human development indicators risen, there had been a historic decline in the rates of conflict and violence.

Taking the long view on this, until the advent of and wide access to modern medicine, analysis of ancient human remains on several continents reveals that our prehistoric stature and health *declined* with the adoption of Neolithic farming and domestication of animals due mainly to zoonotic pathogens, and later with industrialisation²⁸⁰. In his critique of “civilisation” as it evolved, Rudgely observes:

“Modern civilisation can be seen to be fuelled by the striving towards the controlling of an ever-increasing population by an ever-decreasing minority, seeking to dominate not only other cultures (to sustain itself it needs a massive underclass of economically subordinate nations) but to control nature itself, the latter at the expense of which we are now becoming increasingly aware through the prospect of ecological collapse. Cruelty and barbarism may even have increased under the reign of the historical civilisations, and it can be said with certainty that there is an increase in the social and technological means to inflict pain and suffering en masse.... Colonial domination has given way to the apparently benevolent but equally paternalistic enterprise called development. Western agencies with little or no knowledge of local ecological and social conditions implement agricultural and other projects which not only fail to deliver the goods but damage – sometimes irrevocably – the local ecosystem”.

²⁷⁸ Mahbubani, Kishore and Summers, Laurence H. *The Case for Global Optimism*, an article published in Foreign Affairs, by the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 18 April 2016.

²⁷⁹ Kenny, Charles. 2015: *The Best Year in History for the Average Human Being*, an article published in *The Atlantic*, Boston, 18 December 2015.

²⁸⁰ Rudgely, Richard. *Lost Civilisations of the Stone Age*, Arrow Books Limited (Random House Group), 1999 [ISBN: 0-09-922372-4] (pp. 8-9 and 33-34).). Rudgely shows, citing Marija Gimbutas and Yasuda Yoshinori, how the cultural advances of the earliest historic civilisations have their roots clearly in pre-historic indigenous developments, especially after the end of the last Ice Age about 10,000 years ago. (Examples include Berakhat Ram, Lepenski Vir, Tarxien, Newgrange, Stonehenge, and the Jomon culture in Japan) (pp. 24-28).

Mahatma Gandhi replied famously to the question on what he thought of Western Civilisation, that “*it would be a very good idea*”²⁸¹. Of course, by now it is not only “*western*” development agencies, but also others from the East and South that are involved in “*development*”, most notably China. The key will be to avoid Huntington’s projected *Clash of Civilizations*, and instead work together towards a fusion, as he recommends²⁸². Whilst China represents huge risks, not least due to its trend towards greater social control, yet its modernization by adopting Western technology and culture, whilst preserving its own, indicates it is tending towards a greater global compatibility, amplified by its *One Belt One Road* outward investments – but which, while touted as a *win-win* platform for international cooperation, lately raised concerns about Chinese leverage of *debt-equity* swaps as a quasi-colonial grab of strategic assets of impoverished countries unable to service their debts. Its growing support for UN peacekeeping may also lead to concerns about Chinese military bases abroad, such as in Djibouti.

Nonetheless, peace works better than war for China’s future, and stability of the international order has been at the core of its foreign policy, regardless the marginal flexing of muscle that its interests reflect e.g. in the Himalayas, the South China Sea, its rhetorical support for Russia, or its rising defence expenditures. Assuming it can maintain domestic stability, there is little reason to believe that China will not continue on its own chosen path of quasi-socialist modernization, and pursue greater openness, inclusivity, and democracy balanced with ecological sustainability and enhanced connectivity with the rest of the world. Up to recently, it has sought not to replace the current world order but to see it improved and expanded, but its recent position indeed alliance with the anti-western stance of Russia may now be inducing a shift in Chinese perspective towards a “*new order*” that is more assertively *multi-polar*, but in reality meaning where China is in the global lead, with the USA relegated to a declining influence in world affairs.

The power of capital and innovation may still be in America’s favour, defined by technological prowess, but not for long²⁸³. Who will prevail in the advent of AGI – *Artificial General Intelligence*?²⁸⁴ The Vatican has taken a lead role in inter-faith and scientific dialogue leading to the recent *Rome Call* which proposes *six ethical principles that all AI designers should live by*, requiring all AI systems to be explicable, unbiased, and inclusive and require a human to take responsibility for any AI-generated decision²⁸⁵.

As the late Kofi Annan said: “*we do not live in a zero-sum world where someone’s gain automatically comes at another’s expense*”. The UN cannot be just a collection of member states, but must also *serve all peoples*, regardless their state of relative self-determination. Its governments and their leaders must be held accountable for their behaviour towards their own citizens. It must be “*a forum where shared values of*

²⁸¹ Yanis Varoufakis picks up on this in his book *And the Weak Suffer What They Must? – Europe, Austerity and the Threat to Global Stability*, Bodley Head, London [ISBN: 978-1-847-92404-9], where he laments “*false dogmas*” of austerity policies and absence of rational humanism in reforms during the recession.

²⁸² Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996 [ISBN: 0-684-81164-2].

²⁸³ Schmidt, Eric. *Innovation Power – Why Technology will define the Future of Geo-politics*, Foreign Affairs March-April 2023, 28 February 2023 [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/eric-schmidt-innovation-power-technology-geopolitics>]

²⁸⁴ Malaney, Pia. *Markets and Artificial Intelligence*, Institute for New Economic Thinking, April 2023 [<https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/markets-and-artificial-intelligence-some-misgivings>]

²⁸⁵ Madhumita, Murgia. *The Vatican and the Moral Conundrums of AI*, Financial Times, London, 15 February 2023 [<https://www.ft.com/content/40ba0b91-7e72-415b-8ac6-4031252576cc>]

pluralism, tolerance, solidarity, democracy, and dialogue triumph over unilateralism, ultra-nationalism, and over the politics of identity”²⁸⁶.

The UN Charter was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, when the League of Nations was still in existence with forty-three member states, including some non-UN members. As most of Europe except neutral Switzerland had been overrun by Nazi Germany, the League continued a skeletal existence under the leadership of its last Secretary-General, John (Sean) Ernest Lester of neutral Ireland. Through his valiant efforts, although its budget was slashed by 75% during the war, it had been supported by remaining free members and with symbolic contributions by its occupied members’ governments-in-exile (including Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland). Its General Assembly met for the last time in Geneva on 8 April 1946, handed over its possessions and its Palais des Nations to the United Nations, and declared itself to cease existence on 19 April 1946.

Lester, who felt that war could have been avoided if nations abided by the founding vision of Woodrow Wilson, remonstrated with the world powers: “*The League did not fail; it was the nations which failed to use it*”. It was not the weakness of the League that caused the war. Of the new United Nations, he said: “*Success will depend on how it is used, on the justice, wisdom, and courage of leaders and, above all, on the vision and determination of the common people*”. He knew that the human failures that led to World War were the failures of the statesmen and peoples of the League of Nations “*that contented themselves with lip service, that could not face the lesser sacrifices to avoid the greater, and to those peoples and States which foolishly imagined they could be lookers-on*”²⁸⁷. He felt its successor would run along similar lines, as a central agency for international cooperation based on law and justice. Some British politicians, Herbert Morrison and Anthony Eden, felt it should be stronger, and have power sufficient to restrain those who would obstruct peace. Winston Churchill agreed²⁸⁸.

Let us recall the words of Lord Cecil in 1946 on the formal closure of the League of Nations: “*The League is dead, long live the United Nations*”. The story of globalisation and multilateralism, and of dynamic world order will continue in a process of continuous evolution. But from now on it must be more effectively *inclusive and humanised*. The oldest continuing sovereignty in the world echoes this call, observing that “*the aspirations and the claims of masses of people in developing countries are in fact formulated more explicitly in the language of human rights because the awareness of the dignity of any human person has become a common acquisition. Providing a just answer to these expectations is a way to guarantee security and, in many ways, to open the possibility for the consideration of a transcendental dimension of life*”²⁸⁹.

²⁸⁶ Annan, Kofi. *The Next 10 Years in Global Democracy*, Huffington Post, 5 June 2015. Autobiographical memoir: *Intervention – A Life in War and Peace*, Penguin, New York, 2012 [ISBN: 978-1-59420-420-3].

²⁸⁷ Gageby, Douglas. *The Last Secretary-General - Sean Lester and the League of Nations*, published by Town House and Country House, Dublin, 1999, pp. 250-258 [ISBN: 1-86059-108-6].

²⁸⁸ Fosse, Marit & Fox, John. *Sean Lester – The Guardian of a Small Flickering Light*, Hamilton Books, New York & Plymouth, UK, 2016 [ISBN: 978-0-7618-6610-7].

²⁸⁹ Tomasi, Silvio M. *The Religious Dimension of Multilateral Diplomacy and the Church’s Mission in Today’s World*, Ambassadors’ Conference of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1-2 February 2010 (Archbishop Tomasi was Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See, to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva. He was recently elevated to Cardinal on 28 November 2020, and is the Pope’s special delegate to the Sovereign Order of Malta).

Paul Spaak, who in his address on 25 March 1957 on the signing of the *Treaties of Rome* that gave birth to the political, economic, cultural, and most importantly, democratic and voluntary convergence that became the European Union, said it was a matter: “*indeed of the material prosperity of our peoples, the expansion of our economies, social progress and completely new industrial and commercial possibilities, but above all.... a particular conception of life that is humane, fraternal, and just*”. That is what *globalisation* should also be about, through a dynamic reforming multilateralism. He could have easily said this about the United Nations, but there are critical tipping points where quantum or paradigmatic change may be required to avoid catastrophe – and now is such a time²⁹⁰.

Narrowly-principled ideologies tend towards intolerance and the more absolutist their leadership, the more extremist they become. Even in democracies, megalomaniac leadership extolled in cults of personality or celebrity-worship tends ultimately towards systemic exclusion, marginalisation and victimisation. In contrast, open, deliberative, and consensus-seeking models of governance, respect the “other”, avoid demonisation, and engage differences in explorations of diversity that maximise synergies. Such models of governance are a prerequisite for effective dialogue, embracing universal principles - not because they are global but because they are *fundamental to human dignity across all cultures* – and enable integrity, ethics, transparency, accountability and democracy. As Kaplan put it, “*effective leadership will always reside within the mystery of character*”²⁹¹.

We dealt earlier with the internet and what it is doing to our behaviours and brains, and how we need to preserve our ability for contemplation and reflection. In this frenetic “24/7” world, the importance of the day of rest, the sabbath or seventh day, in the Abrahamic faiths is also found based on lunar cycles in Buddhism and ancient Babylonia. As the wiser Francis says “*We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity. Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else*”.... “*Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others And motivates us to greater concerns for nature and the poor*”²⁹².

As cognitive beings, advancing science notwithstanding, we remain still in our infancy of understanding of the intricate complexity of our biosphere. We observe the intelligence of other living creatures, from another primate, or crow, to an invertebrate octopus, and their ability to manipulate other objects, to plan, achieve a goal, even to mimic, to trick, and to recognise themselves in a reflection. Many evidence capacity for recognition, memory, reasoning, communicating, problem-solving, understanding, perceiving

²⁹⁰ Very good reasons for change are given in Al Gore’s *The Future – Six Drivers of Global Change*, Random House, New York, 2013 [ISBN: 978-0-553-84107-7], as: (1) *increasing economic globalisation*; (2) *digital communications*; (3) *shifting balance of power*; (4) *unsustainable growth in consumption, pollution, and environmental depletion*; (5) *genomic, biotechnology, neuroscience and life science revolutions*; (6) *radical disruption between humanity’s aggregate power and the Earth’s ecosystems*.

²⁹¹ Kaplan, Robert. *Warrior Politics – Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*, Vintage Books (A division of Random House Inc.), New York, 2003 (first published 2001) [ISBN: 0-375-50563-6] (p.150).

²⁹² Bergoglio, Jorge Maria aka Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’ – Praised Be – Encyclical Letter on Care of Our Common Home*, Veritas Publications, Dublin, 2015 (originally published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana) [ISBN: 978-1-84730-597-8], pp 116-118.

complexity, adapting to change, feeling emotion, pleasure or joy - or suffering distress, fear and pain. Only lately have we become aware that our species is not the first to engage in the globalisation of communication, nor of musical composition. The humpback whales' extremely low-frequency songs, change every year, adapted and 'popularised' across different pods, traveling 16,000 kilometres across the world's oceans.

Nor is love uniquely human. We see it in the maternal bond of protection, and sometimes self-sacrifice, of every mother towards her offspring, regardless the species. We see it also *between* animal species, in the care that many often show to the hapless offspring of other kinds when needing rescue. And we know of many cases where a human being at risk has been rescued spontaneously by a dolphin, a horse, a dog, without any training to do so. We experience first-hand that more direct relationship of recognition between species, and of bonding, including the therapeutic benefit to human healing. If we are sentient enough to care to observe, to listen, and sometimes to touch with compassion, we are rewarded by such recognition, and even by some rudimentary expression of a desire to communicate, to "*be together with*" in a raw unison of being. And we feel their distress, and their dependency on our rescue, as their habitats or lives come under threat.

Some religions focus on a transcendent supreme being, but some articulate a cosmic divinity that is both transcendent source of, and immanent in, Creation, through the Spirit, the binding force of which is Love. Through the Logos incarnate and resurrected, we witness the inevitability and redemption of Death as our personal transcendence. Our mortality is our gateway beyond. From the moment of our conception in the womb, to the moment of our mortality achieved, energy flows to us, through us, and from us, to embrace communion with others. Our world therefore, "*is a web of relationships*" and as "*creatures tend towards God and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the Universe we can find any number of constantly and secretly interwoven relationships*"²⁹³. We can say, *we are not unique*, and yet each of us can claim *I am unique, and you are unique*, but we are unique, *together*. Or, in the reputed words of Amergin Glúingel, legendary First Druid of Ireland, incanted over the ancient Boyne Valley civilization whose monuments date before the Pyramids at Gizeh²⁹⁴:

<i>Am gaeth i m-muir</i>	<i>I am the wind on sea</i>
<i>Am tond trethan</i>	<i>I am the ocean wave</i>
<i>Am fuaim mara</i>	<i>I am the roar of the sea</i>
<i>Am dam secht ndirend</i>	<i>I am the stag of seven fights</i>
<i>Am séig i n-aill</i>	<i>I am a hawk on cliff</i>
<i>Am dér gréne</i>	<i>I am a dew-drop of the sun</i>
<i>Am cain lubai</i>	<i>I am the fairest of flowers</i>
<i>Am torc ar gail</i>	<i>I am a boar for valour</i>
<i>Am hé i l-lind</i>	<i>I am a salmon in a pool</i>
<i>Am loch i m-maig</i>	<i>I am the lake on a plain</i>
<i>Am brí a ndai</i>	<i>I am a mountain in a man</i>
<i>Am brí dánae</i>	<i>I am excellence of the arts</i>
<i>Am gai I fodb.feras feochtu</i>	<i>I am a spear waging combat</i>
<i>Am dé delbas do chind codnu</i>	<i>I am a god who fires the head, inspires</i>

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ See: [https://www.academia.edu/84019066/Hearkening_back_to_Inspirations_for_Global_Harmony]

VI.2. Summary synthesis & recommendations

1. Preserve our planetary civilisation

The progress of our planetary civilisation now depends critically on the preservation of those universal values espoused in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and detailed in the Millennium Declaration. The aspirations of all humanity articulated in those visionary documents depend for fulfilment on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the primacy of investments and partnerships for that purpose.

They also depend on progressive development of the corpus of international law that regulates relations between states and over the global commons, and on the processes of global and national reform that bring our societies into compliance and harmony. This also requires some new methods of prevention of flagrant violations, and the elimination of impunity for rogue behaviour through enforcement of the rule of law.

The human dignity of all peoples, through the institutionalised solidarity painstakingly developed by decades of successful multilateralism, stands at risk. The time has come to redefine human progress and design a development approach that protects the biosphere and reduces institutional, economic and societal stress. Open, deliberative and consensus-seeking models of governance, must engage differences in explorations of diversity that maximise synergies. Such models of governance embracing universal principles are a prerequisite for effective dialogue - not because they are global but because they are fundamental to human dignity and fulfillment across all cultures – and thereby enable integrity, ethics, transparency, accountability and democracy.

Environmental stewardship, preserving biodiversity, and tackling climate change, all require dovetailed partnerships and collaboration between governments at all levels, with civil society and the corporate sector. Social media can be engineered and moderated primarily with this in mind. Social responsibility must take precedence over profit. Models of economic growth and development strategies need to take account that our planetary resources are not limitless, and on the contrary the scale of exhaustion, waste, pollution and environmental contamination actually now require active redress if the human milieu is to be sustainable not just for human life but for ecosystems of biodiversity and for effective carbon sequestration.

2. Create space for civil society to flourish

The search for new norms in a world of globalised relativity needs to be mindful of the fundamental values that undergird our human dignity. A world where human rights and freedoms are paramount must be matched by codified responsibilities. To this end, civic education needs a radical transformation, to ensure a vibrant civil society. The global reach of communication today enables the first truly global civil society, suffused with a planetary consciousness and conscience. But corruption is a disease which enables state capture, kleptocracy, repression and autocracy. Governments must follow-through on their obligations as states parties to the *UN Convention Against Corruption*. This will release the energies of civil society through active citizen engagement, amplified by social media, to direct political reform and hold leaders accountable. Empowering civil society will require robust defence of civil rights and governmental enabling of civil society stakeholder participation through transparent public consultations at all levels and in citizen forums; this should be matched by funding and support streams for capacity-

building and alliances. Particular emphasis should be given to women's participation and leadership, especially in conflict/post-conflict settings and indigenous communities.

3.Reduce growing disparities and restore human development progress

There is a growing divergence in values between high-income and low-income countries, and between democracies and autocracies, and *within* many countries. A real challenge is to address the *massive disempowerment of the hundreds of millions*, perhaps even billions, of people across the world as a result of automation and the Coronavirus pandemic, and the loss of jobs ensuing, a half-billion in formal employment, and as much as 1.5 billion (loss of income) in terms of the informal sector. Policies that enhance social protection, empowerment, and solidarity alongside one another, will help nurture greater social inclusion based on common human security. The debt trap continues to afflict those countries that cannot hold their governments adequately accountable for fiscal rectitude, ethical integrity and transparency. Debt forgiveness can leverage governance and tax reforms and *basic universal income* would be emancipating and transformative. The OECD-G20 Inclusive Framework (IF) on BEPS 2.0, and guidance to apply GloBE rules to MNEs from 2024, for a minimum ETR of 15%, will help boost public finances²⁹⁵.

4.Build global human security and resilience

A new worldwide fabric of resilience, upon which to build a new global human security architecture, would preserve civilisation in the face of mounting existential threats, i.e. a global resilience network, parts of the architecture of which are actually already in place. With a greater focus on *human*, as distinct from, but in addition to, state security, this is what lies behind the proposal for a *Global Resilience Council*. Combined with the *Resilience Agenda* put together by the World Economic Forum, this could be part of a new *global resilience architecture*. It could make more effective use of military and civil defence assets for disaster relief and ensure that such infrastructure, assets, and personnel, are converted towards human rights protection, natural and technological disaster prevention, mitigation and response, and emergency support to civilians. Military base conversion should enable creation of *global stability nodes* to manage mass displacement, humanitarian corridors, safe havens, status determination, and *unarmed civilian protection* as part of a new *global resilience architecture*.

5.Regulate global corporations to preserve competition and enforce standards

Growing market concentration in almost all sectors demands a new global approach, regulatory and enforceable. Better regulation of competition should prevent market concentration and state/regulatory capture, regardless the national, international or planetary nature of the domains exploited. There is an acute need to ensure accountability to the public interest, whilst limiting the abnormal accumulation of capital. This warrants a global legal convention on the international legal standing of multinational/global corporations, their rights and responsibilities, going beyond the voluntary UN Global Compact, and OECD principles of corporate governance. By this is meant, not obstructive, but enabling regulation: enabling free and fair competition, enabling small-scale (SME) start-up entrepreneurship and innovation, and implementing anti-trust or anti-oligopoly legislation through robust enforcement agencies. A similar measure should tackle the growing impunity of trans-national *Ultra-High Net Worth Individual* billionaires, and prevent the practice of speculative "*disaster capitalism*". In this regard, stakeholder capitalism may offer new scope for advancing such measures.

²⁹⁵ IF: [<https://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/agreed-administrative-guidance-for-the-pillar-two-globe-rules.pdf>]

6.Enhance digital governance, social media, and regulate AI

Digital governance needs to be strengthened in line with universal values to ensure that digital capitalism serves the common good, and is used as a force for inclusion rather than exclusion. Big Data can be harnessed to build a better world, affirming *positive inclusive values*, combating hatred and exclusion, and reducing the digital divide. Such data harvesting could be a formidable resource for the United Nations in upholding human rights, advancing the SDGs, and helping prevent conflict. Better-managed, social media can become an instrument of self-determination, if identity and privacy can be protected. The permanent service and subordination of artificial intelligence to human control and responsible authority is essential. The fields of globally-scoped artificial intelligence and cyberspace also require global regulation, including protections for our digital privacy.

7.Advance conflict resolution to heal wounds and stabilise societies

Political and societal convergence can only prevail if capacities for peaceful negotiation, arbitration, and dispute resolution underpin efforts at consensus-building. The gap between theory and practice in conflict resolution must be closed, and capacity built for mediation and negotiation, including robust support for effective Track II diplomacy. The challenge is for globalised civil society to be more actively engaged in national and international problem-solving, deploying Track II citizen diplomacy and with eminent women leaders at the forefront of such efforts. Avoiding double standards, the process of political compromise should be between group interests, and not at the expense of universal values, norms, principles, ethics, and international law (as per page 85 above).

8.End impunity for crimes against humanity

Only through the perception and reality of global and national institutions upholding universal values and legal norms, and prohibiting their violation, can we end impunity for crimes against humanity including war crimes and genocide. As called for in the Millennium Declaration, all countries should sign and ratify the *Rome Statute* of the International Criminal Court, and also ensure compliance with the decisions of the International Court of Justice.

9.Accelerate UN Reforms

Major structural reforms of the United Nations system and of other international institutions must be accelerated, rendering them more inclusively multi-stakeholder entities. The UN must also be empowered to safeguard multilateralism and prevent the rogue behaviour of autocracies that threaten these norms. It must also confront extreme concentrations of capital and corporate power that lack transparency, democratic accountability and social responsibility. The ethical imperatives contained in the InterAction Council's *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* should be mainstreamed by the UN General Assembly in the *New Agenda for Peace*, and in 'Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow' in 2024. Only by acting collectively, and that means individually-contributing, can we limit the *unhealthy concentration of power* in the world, whether political, economic, corporate, or cultural. These and related phenomena demand a new approach to multilateralism that is inclusive of legitimate actors, with a new constellation of enforcement agencies and avoid the intrusion of surveillance technologies that undermine personal dignity and empower obscure forms of tyranny.

Civil society organisations as well as corporate giants and digital media represent new forces which require UN structural change in global governance, hence a *chamber of*

representatives of civil society and a chamber of representatives of the corporate sector. For civil society participation, the UN system needs to develop new methods of inclusion, not only for participation in general but with appropriate decision-making in such a chamber as well as with specified representation, rights and roles within the Economic and Social Council, and an eventual Global Resilience Council and/or reformed Security Council. A similar approach would establish a UN *parliamentary network* to function as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly. Regional institutions with parliamentary structures including the Council of Europe, the European Union, the African Union, ECOWAS, and Mercosur should be considered as examples. The relatively recent *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* is a good example of a multi-stakeholder organisation comprised of governments, corporations and civil society representatives.

The profound democratic deficit fossilised in the composition and functioning of the UN Security Council must be radically altered and this organ and others rendered fit-for-purpose in this 21st century. Global peace and disarmament are crucial for saving humanity, which requires reform of the veto-power and membership aspects of the Security Council. For starters, no country can legitimately veto any Security Council resolution on a dispute to which it is party, according to UN Charter article 27.3, depending on how that is interpreted. The world must stop interpreting that so narrowly as to enable rogue impunity through Security Council inertia. Hence, article 27.3 should be re-interpreted, without holding world peace hostage to a comprehensive UN reform. It is also time to revive the imperative of disarmament, eliminate nuclear weapons, turn swords into ploughshares, and missiles into windmills. And sanctions regimes must be subject to regular review, especially to avoid collateral effects on the innocent.

The UN must act quickly to preserve the Global Commons of planetary ecosystems and public goods that lie outside national sovereignty, as well as the seven biomes on Earth. It should introduce an Outer Space global authority similar to the International Seabed Authority. The proliferation of satellites in their tens of thousands by Amazon, OneWeb, Telesat, Boeing, Viasat, in addition to the ESA, US Space Command and growing Russian and Chinese ambitions, warrant great urgency. Another aspect of the global commons relates to bio-ethical standards, and in particular the appropriation of ownership of naturally-occurring genetic material, e.g. of rare species with benefits for human health, or of genetically-modified organisms.

And, the United Nations must become *meta*-national not just *inter*-national. It is perhaps time to revisit the conclusions of the Commission on Global Governance, and its report *Our Global Neighbourhood* in 1995, in advance of the *Summit of the Future* in 2024.

VI.3. A way forward

Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step; only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon wil find his right road.

Dag Hammarskjold

In his memoir on the terrible death and suffering that he bore witness to after the Battle of Solferino on 24 June 1859, Henry Dunant observed that “*new and terrible methods of destruction are invented daily, with perseverance worthy of a better object*”, sharing the lament of a great thinker who said “*Men have reached the point of killing without hating each other, and the highest glory, the finest of all the arts, is mutual extermination*”.

Already over a century and a half ago, his humanitarian appeal led to the creation of the Red Cross Movement, but his conclusion alas, still remains ever poignant and pertinent:

*Last of all – in an age when we hear so much of progress and civilisation, is it not a matter of urgency, since unhappily we cannot always avoid wars, to press forward in a human and truly civilised spirit the attempt to prevent, or at least to alleviate, the horrors of war?*²⁹⁶

How enormously we have failed that after his lifetime, spent in latter penury until his death in 1910, not one but two horrendous world wars ensued, and multiple others in most regions, with the League of Nations and the later United Nations proving unable to prevent belligerents from dragging others into conflict, and as we stand today in the midst of tragedy at the heart of Europe, the Middle East, much of Africa and parts of Asia, with totalitarianism lurking powerfully beyond, and a climate crisis looming.

Urgency therefore beckons us to forge ahead. Apart from the beleaguered primacy of the United Nations, and the incremental participation of current national leaders-in-office in the *World Economic Forum* since 1974, there are now several networks of former heads of state/government and other world leaders active in advocacy for global cooperation to deal with humanity's various challenges. Most notably, and in order of their creation, these include the *InterAction Council* (1983), the *Council of Women World Leaders* (1996), the *Club de Madrid* (2001), the *Global Leadership Foundation* (2004), the *Elders* (2007), and the *Nizami Ganjavi International Center* (2012). With overlapping members and sometimes shared agendas, these represent a considerable vector of strategic influence for change, the more so when they combine with broad-based civil society movements, especially those representing the younger generations, and engage with the current powers-that-be. Working together, they could focus on the following:

Low-hanging fruits:

1. Implement and enforce the UN Convention against Corruption.
2. Ratify the Rome Statue of the *International Criminal Court*.
3. Adhere to the *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative*.
4. Through a global treaty, enforce standards on global corporations.
5. Shift stakeholder capitalism towards accelerated de-carbonisation.
6. Enforce treaties on the *Law of the Sea* and *Outer Space*.
7. Empower civil society's ability to engage in global policy decisions.
8. Build capacities for mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution.
9. Revive disarmament and conversion of military assets for peaceful use.

UN Reforms:

1. UNGA to adopt the *Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities*.
2. Revise the UN Charter and reform the UN Security Council, etc.
3. Establish a Global Resilience Council and network.
4. Establish UN Civil Society and Parliamentary chambers.
5. Increase UN funding and support to civil society.
6. Create a UN Futures Lab, with a global collective intelligence system.

²⁹⁶ Dunant, Henry. *A Memory of Solferino* (June 1859), International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1986 (pages 116, 127) [ISBN: 2-88145-006-7].

To these ends, world leaders should also be enjoined to *extoll the vision of a world based on human dignity and universal values, and upholding the highest standards of leadership integrity and competence*. In this regard, mandates and action to promote equal women's participation in all levels of leadership will be most important, worldwide.

Whether seeking refuge or prosperity, by flight or adventure, for hundreds of thousands of years humans have left their past behind, and moved, sought new lives, and made new beginnings. Such migrations have incubated new peoples, forged new nations, and generated new cultures. Succeeding generations have passed on memory, myth or mystery, in heritage or hermeneutics, to guide their next travellers in their journeys through life. Today, the enjoyment of literature, film, and broadcast have become new tools to escape confined personal realities, imagine better prospects, and broaden experience with wider frames of reference to interpret both past and present and enable more holistic aspirations in new pathways of fulfilment. Our new travel, telecommunications and global networking, have brought about a planetary civilization. Now, having filled our world, and agreed on our universal values, it is more important than ever to find better ways of living together, with new openness, new learning, new engagement, new trust, new synergies, and new or reformed institutions.

In the tale of a healed broken femur 15,000 years ago, Margaret Mead is said to have mused that it was a sign of civilisation: *Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilisation starts:*

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; for, indeed, that's all who ever have*²⁹⁷.

It is time for us to realise that our conquest of this planet has placed all life in greatest peril of mass extinction, as we also face the destruction of human civilisation. But it is also the dawn of our first truly global civilisation, a time of our greatest capability and promise, and an enormous moral obligation to guarantee inter-generational equity.

For some, it is half-full, for others half-empty. Unless we mend its cracks, we will never fulfil it, but hold a broken chalice in our hands, beyond redemption.

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²⁹⁷ Attributed to her, posthumously. [<https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/partners/dr-gorke-physically-distant-not-socially-distant-a-healed-bone-mead.docx>] which seems to be credible according to *Quote Investigator*: <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/11/12/change-world/>

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