

We are living though the most exciting period in history in terms of innovation, scientific and technological advance and an understanding of our world and its environment and yet the dream of finding a way to live with each other in peace, that has exercised philosophers and political scientists since the dawn of time, still eludes us. Why has the ability of being able to see in real time from the confines of a small mobile device what is happening on the far side of the planet or being confronted with the disasters and wars that are blighting people's lives as they unfold, not brought a greater consciousness about the way in which we manage ourselves, not only in our domestic and national lives but also globally?

Partly, the various peace groups and campaigns have failed to motivate collective global opinion. There have not been the catalysts that led to unforeseen uprisings such as the Arab Spring. The more people reinforce their own prejudices, by remaining in their comfort zone of those with similar views, rather than being stimulated by those who kick over the traces and lead to change, the more difficult this becomes. Harvard Law Professor Cass Sunstein, formerly Administrator of the White House Office in the Obama Administration, describes this in his new book *How Change Happens* as the concept of "group polarization" in that deliberation tends to move groups, and the individuals who compose them, toward a more extreme point in the direction indicated by their own predeliberation judgments.

From the Pharaohs, the Chinese Emperors and Pax Romana to the utterances of Eisenhower and Churchill there have been aspirations for world government – a concept which, in these days of disillusion with politics and government in general, can seem quite scary. There is greater sympathy for a system of global *governance* in which there is no potentially tyrannical single power but a structure of local and self-government and an intertwining of global institutions with proper accountability subject to the rule of law and having a rational relationship with one another. Yet we are far away from that – we have self-appointed groupings of the G7 (or G8 depending on where you position Russia) which originated with a 1975 summit hosted by France, the G22 (now G20) which met in 1999 and now annually and aims to be a model for global cooperation. Yet it is ad hoc and has no democratic or even institutional integrity as to its creation. These groupings, however, can make decisions which affect every human being. The multi-nationals and so-called FAANGS have become notorious for exercising cross-continental power and influence on billions of people and with turnovers greater than the total worth of many independent countries yet have no legitimated political accountability.

In 1625 "De jure belli ac pacis" (*On the Law of War and Peace*) written by Hugo Grotius on the legal status of war became a foundation for the concept of an international law. In 1795 Immanuel Kant wrote the essay "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" which sets out three basic requirements for organizing human affairs to permanently abolish the threat of present and future war, and, thereby, help establish a new era of lasting peace throughout the world. Almost a century later Alfred Lord Tennyson was ruminating about "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" in his poem Locksley Hall and William Gladstone spoke of the "great household of the world." The founder of the Baha'i Faith envisaged a commonwealth of peoples, based on participation and consultation including a world legislature, an international court and an international executive empowered to carry out the decisions of these legislative and judicial bodies.

There is, of course, the pragmatic approach that, if it is working then do not fix it. Haphazard arrangements, if they enable the exercise of power in an acceptable manner, do not necessarily need to conform to a neat structure which satisfies academics or administrative perfectionists. I do not detect, however, widespread satisfaction with the status quo. There is

a need for a structured order. What do we mean by world order? For some years as an MP I was also the Chair of an international Parliamentary body called Parliamentarians for World Order but we discovered that this did not translate very well not least because Hitler had espoused world order but, of course, under the hegemony of the Nazi state – so we changed the name to Parliamentarians' Global Action and it still goes strong today. World order or, maybe, the preferred term of global governance must be consensual and, while the term itself implies an administering authority, that must be accountable and have the capacity to adapt. As Edmund Burke so aptly states in his Reflections on the Revolution in France “A state without the means of some change, is without the means of its own conservation.”

Of course, any reference to a supranational authority arouses suspicion especially among the conspiracy theorists. We need look only at our own country to see the mythology that has been built up about the EU amounting at its extreme to an unaccountable totalitarian European superstate. There is understandable concern about quis custodiet ipsos custodes and we should not dismiss this but address it.

With the rise of narrow nationalism, populism and bolshevism, in which the majority feels that it has the right to tyrannise or ignore the minority, we may be living through a crisis of democracy – but it may be the practice rather than the form which is at fault. Britain paid the price three years ago for being the most dirigiste state in the old Europe: despite devolution to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly the fundamental control over the purse strings exercised by Westminster over both local government and the devolved legislatures has left a legacy of great dissatisfaction and sense of disempowerment. There is no doubt that it was this failure to show a proper plan for regionalisation and improvement throughout the UK, despite the Northern Powerhouse, coupled with austerity that led to many voting to leave the EU as a symbol of centralised authority although it was directed mainly at our own Parliament.

A necessary part of the answer to this is a proper devolved federalist system of not just political power but also the commensurate funding – to which so far there has been only a pusillanimous political response. These issues can be translated upwards not just to European but also global issues. Does anyone seriously doubt that climate change or cyber security can be left to states acting individually? These are often transnational regional problems and many are global ones so, yes, global problems need global solutions. Let me venture a controversial point which, in the antipathy towards empire (and I am no apologist), is often overlooked: the reason that both the Roman and British empires were arguably more successful than other attempts at global domination was that they both allowed local customs, religions and forms of government and administration to survive and, indeed, were often incorporated, ensuring that the supervening power was less obtrusive than it might otherwise have been. The degree of continuing interest in Roman institutions and the success of the Commonwealth are legacies to that and lessons to be observed.

Maybe what I have set out is sufficient crisis to stimulate a global movement. Hitherto, sadly, the catalyst for such momentous change has been global conflict. After the First World War we had the Leagues of Nations, killed through American isolationism. After the Second World War both President Eisenhower and Winston Churchill called for world government. The catalyst of conflict has not always proved beneficial. We have lived with the consequences of the Peace of Westphalia after the Thirty Years' War for almost four hundred years. It reinforced the autonomy of the state to act with impunity within its borders, it found its place in the UN's reluctance to intervene in states' affairs without invitation and was challenged only within living memory by the American involvement in Somalia and the now universal acceptance that the international community has not only the right but the duty to intervene for humanitarian or peaceful imperatives. It is now reinforced by the doctrine of

Responsibility To Protect – an inversion of the traditional obligations between the citizen and the state and subject to international scrutiny.

The global conflagrations of the last century and the continuing wars around the world as well as terrorism and religion-generated conflict might be causes of despair but consider what advances have been made, some quite recently. The extension of the franchise and improved empowerment of women, the universalisation of human rights, the Geneva Conventions, acknowledgement of our trusteeship of our planet and its wildlife as well as its natural resources, transnational co-operation in the exploration of outer space and now, only a fledgling since 2002, an International Criminal Court in which, effectively for the first time in history, individuals and not just states have become subject to international law. Both internationally and domestically we are seeing the globalisation of criminal offences justiciable in both national and international courts. There is a long way to go but the genie is out of the bottle.

I venture that the essential parameters for a just world order are the Rule of Law, Justice, including both preventative and retributive elements, Accountability and Democracy which gives voice to minority rights and localism – not the dangerous bolshevism enshrined in narrow national populism. Federalism encapsulates the concept of decisions being made at the lowest practicable level and reserved to a higher authority only where appropriate – it is a bottom up and not a top down democracy.

What is the desired panoply of international institutions? Those international treaties which seek to regulate behaviour which transcend national boundaries often falter through lack of an enforcement mechanism which, in itself, implies a tribunal to determine disputes. The oldest legal institution dedicated to resolving international disputes is the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), established at The Hague by inter-governmental agreement in 1899 which has jurisdiction over disputes when at least one party is a state (or an organisation of states) and when both parties to the dispute expressly agree to submit their dispute for resolution. This may well be a model to be used or replicated. Territorial disputes between states can be adjudicated in the International Court of Justice (or World Court), again by consent of the parties but the absence of, say, a court attached to the Refugee Convention means that there is nothing other than the court of public opinion to hold a country to its obligations towards migrants. The Rio Declaration of 1992 (and accompanying Framework Convention on Climate Change) led to the Kyoto protocol signed in Japan on 11 December 1997.

This Protocol, for the first time, contained international obligations requiring countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions below specified levels. Yet there is no way of enforcing this and that is why there is now a campaign to create an International Court for the Environment (ICE), an idea first proposed in 1999 at a conference in Washington. Whatever one's views may be of the EU, European environmental law is regulated by the European Commission, with disputes being referable to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

We do, of course, have the International Criminal Court – the first time since the ecclesiastical supranational authority of the church was used to supersede temporal courts that individuals, rather than states, have become accountable in international law. It is too proximate to its creation to evaluate this and questions remain about its internal integrity and sustainability but I believe that in due course it will be seen to be one of the profoundest developments in international jurisdiction. The reality is that all international agreements need oversight and accountability.

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**'Global Problems Need Global Solution'**  
Speech by Keith Best

Finally, what about the voice of the global commons? The idea of a UN Parliamentary Assembly to address the democratic deficit at the UN (despite the Preamble to the Charter stating "We the Peoples") now has a momentum having been endorsed by more than 1,500 politicians from 122 countries.

With such developments in only recent times we should not lose heart. We may now live in a more dangerous world than in living memory but we are also entertaining the framework in which we can meet conflict and abuse and provide a more peaceful environment in which we may yet realise Tennyson's dream of  
"Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

**Keith Best**  
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