

## 2018-Sept 2 A World Parliament in Our Future?

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We who live in the 21st century are living during one of the most exciting times in all of human history. Might we even witness the creation of a World Parliament as part of the United Nations? But how could that happen given the improbability of the UN Charter being amended to permit that?

Nevertheless sometimes totally unexpected good things happen. How many observers anticipated the end of the Cold War and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall? How many observers anticipated the quick ratification by 60 countries of the 1998 Rome Statute that resulted in the creation of the International Criminal Court only 4 years later in 2002? How many people know that a proposal to create a World Parliament as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly has even been endorsed by the European Parliament, the Pan-African Parliament, and the Latin-American Parliament? How many people know that that kind of change would not require an amendment to the UN Charter as long as the World Parliament is created by the UN General Assembly as a subsidiary organ to itself under Article 22 of the UN Charter? How many people know that a somewhat similar procedure was used to create the European Parliament in 1967, to authorize the direct election of its members in 1979, and then to make it the legislature of the European Union in 2007? All of this amazing history is described on pages 369-370 of the recently published book *A World Parliament: Governance and Democracy in the 21st Century* by Jo Leinen and Andreas Bummel.

In his impressive book *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century* published in 1964 the brilliant economist Kenneth Boulding made the point that the significance of the 20th century is that it marks the time when the industrial revolution, what he calls the second great transition in the life-style of humans, spread beyond a few "developed countries" to most of the nations of the world. He notes that this second great transition has occurred much more rapidly than the first great transition, the agricultural revolution. That first great change in how humans live started about 12,000 years ago and hasn't yet reached a few remote places in the world still considered to be "uncivilized."

The industrial revolution greatly changed not only the way that goods are produced but also the kinds of goods that get produced. New means of transportation (bicycles, trains, cars, airplanes, and jet engines) changed the distances people could and would travel. New means of communication (telegrams, telephones, radios, films, television, the internet, and cell phones) changed the ways people can communicate with each other. As is often noted, "Modern technological developments in transportation and communication are making the world smaller every day."

In the 21st century another great transition is occurring, from inter-nationalism to globalism. What exactly is the difference between inter-nationalism and globalism, this new transition taking place in the 21st century? The difference between these two outlooks is one of viewing the world as made up of a collection of nation-states versus viewing the world as a single planet where national boundaries are relatively insignificant. The appropriate image for inter-nationalism is a map of the world or a traditional globe where different countries appear in different colors, each one bordered by a solid black line. On the other hand, the appropriate image for globalism is the photo of Earth from space where there are no national boundaries and the unity & solitariness of the planet in space are evident.

The word "inter-nationalism" comes from Latin and means "between" or "among" nations. In this framework people do not relate directly to each other as individuals but usually interact with each other as citizens of different nations and in formal settings by means of national representatives. Crossing a national boundary usually means getting inspected, being subject to different laws, using a different language, and using different money. Although it is not possible to point to some single moment when the transition from inter-nationalism to globalism begins, it seems that a significant event relevant to this transition was the photographing of the Earth from space done in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Everyone could see that national boundaries are purely human constructions and definitely not part of the natural world.

Our 21st century is viewed as the "age of globalization." That term "globalization" is often taken to refer to the domination of the global economy by transnational corporations. That situation is certainly a major factor in the way that our global society is changing. These corporations more than any other institutions are operating in a world where national borders are less and less relevant.

But we are also witnessing globalization, in another sense, the progressive diminution of the importance of national borders in all facets of human life: disease (avian flu, HIV/AIDS, pandemics across national borders), the internet, music, science, education, athletics, tourism, crime (drug trafficking, smuggling people & weapons across national boundaries, pirating patents & copyrighted material), and so on. Consider how a growing proportion of people are even marrying across national borders. Is there anyone who doesn't know at least one such couple?

Another indication of globalism is the growing concern for preservation of the environment of the whole Earth. When we think of problems such as global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, the growing disparity in the average standard of living in different countries, and unrestrained consumption of non-renewable resources, it is obvious that national governments focused on limited geographical areas and acting separately in terms of national interest are not likely to deal successfully with these problems which are global in scope.

In inter-nationalism the primary loyalty of individuals is still to their national governments. International policy-making organizations such as the League of Nations, the United Nations, UNESCO, the World Health Organization, the Universal Postal Union, & the International Atomic Energy Agency may be created to deal with international problems, but these organizations aim to assist cooperation among the national governments, not particular individuals. Creating a World Parliament as an advisory body to the UN General Assembly would give individuals an opportunity to influence national governments on international issues. In order to go further toward globalism another important change could be made. The primary loyalty of individuals could shift to a real global government, a democratic world federation which would be over the national governments, similar to how the U.S. national government is over our state governments. The global community could follow a path similar to what the USA did when it went from the Articles of Confederation and Continental Congress to the U.S. Constitution and a national federation with a national parliament. Planet Earth would be going from the confederal United Nations to a democratic world federation.

Is it possible that such a change in our global political institutions could occur? Nations continue to compete with each other economically and for status in all areas (science, entertainment, sports, art, literature). The two world wars were motivated by struggles for status between Britain & Germany, between Japan & China, and between Russia & Germany while the Cold War was a struggle for top status between the Soviet Union & the USA. Similar struggles for status are now occurring between the USA & China and between India & China. Nationalism is not a spent force.

Nevertheless globalism is alive and having some influence on how people think. A substantial proportion of people worldwide now say that they view themselves as global citizens and are as

concerned about what is good for the world community as they are about what is good for their nation-state. During the "Global Week of Action for a World Parliament," October 19-28, 2018 citizens and civil society groups around the world will organize activities and events to call for the establishment of a world parliament. If you would like to know more about the movement to support the creation of a World Parliament to make the UN more democratic and the argumentation about it, I suggest you look at the 407-page book [A World Parliament: Governance and Democracy in the 21st Century](#) by Jo Leinen and Andreas Bummel or search "World Parliament" online. Yes, this struggle for a World Parliament is a central issue for our 21st century. I hope it succeeds.