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## How Do We Create a World Government?

*Government is the thing. Law is the thing. Not brotherhood, not international cooperation, not security councils that can stop war only by waging it. . . . Where does security lie, anyway—security against the thief, the murderer? In brotherly love? Not at all. It lies in government.*

—E.B. White

**T**he historic meetings in San Francisco at the close of WWII that led to the signing of the UN Charter created an unprecedented world organization in a matter of months. The delegates and ordinary people everywhere were strongly motivated for change by the unspeakable horrors of the recent world war. In addition, well-timed and far-sighted leadership was provided by President Roosevelt and several other world leaders. We believe that a similar confluence of events, popular support, and enlightened leadership will lead to the creation of a democratic world government; but it is a tragic reality of our planet's history that a major conflagration will probably have to precede and motivate the creation of the government of all humankind.

We have argued in this book that today's global citizens' movements for peace and justice may well provide the needed

initiative for building one world democracy when the timing is right; we believe global grassroots efforts will take the lead at times by asserting and expressing the innate sovereignty of the world's people in unmistakable ways.

But the assent of elected politicians will also be crucial. In theory, even without the participation of a popular movement, a world-wide emergency or catastrophe could motivate a critical mass of the heads of state of countries to agree to a global union. This could give us a world government overnight—at least a potentially dangerous top-down version. We allude to this possibility to prove the point that those who now exercise state power are *de facto* in an immediate position to delegate their war-making powers or other powers to a minimalist world government.

Here's a more hopeful scenario: If several prestigious major powers seized the day—as a preventive measure—and proposed a draft of a democratic world constitution open to all states to discuss and ratify, we might soon see the evolution of a global government. In such a situation, we envision that grassroots movements of global citizens would rise to the occasion in concert with such an initiative from the top. They would insist that their respective nations sign on to the movement, while pressuring delegates to incorporate the highest of democratic and human rights traditions into the provisions of the new constitution.

Nor is it far-fetched to imagine that a visionary politician of the stature of a Wilson or a Roosevelt, under the pressure of world events, could arise in the US and call for a constitutional convention to replace the UN Charter. With this sort of leadership from the world's greatest power, a world convention might easily happen. Once a constitution convention was convened, global citizens' groups and NGOs would no doubt be

integral to the process of designing a global legislature. Earlier we considered a related scenario, in which an advisory world legislature becomes the “political cover” for visionary politicians who would base their call for change on its de facto legitimacy.

Any of the scenarios listed above could occur inside or outside the framework of the United Nations. Even a group of less powerful nations could initiate the process of calling a constitutional convention or forming a limited global government open to all nations—again, within or outside of the UN system. And there are many other top-down or bottom-up scenarios one could imagine. The democracies of the world could form a federation open to all democratic countries; NATO could be expanded and incorporated into the UN as a world security force; even the US under a visionary president could invite other democratic countries to federate with it under a modified US constitution.

The same objective can be achieved in many different ways; one can build a house out of different materials using different designs, but still end up with a suitable home. Of course, some materials and designs may be more efficient than others. The same is true for the work of creating global government. There are a number of possible ways to build it well, with all the previously identified key ingredients getting incorporated in a variety of workable configurations. In this chapter we will examine a few of these scenarios.

### **Regional organizations could create a restructured UN**

A number of important regional treaty organizations already exist today, including the Organization of the American States, the African Union, the EU, NATO, the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Arab League. Some of these, such as the European Union and to a lesser extent the African Union, are evolving toward becoming genuine federations of states. As international law develops in each part of the world in accord with regional standards and traditions, such regional groups could become stepping stones toward a governed world. There is in fact nothing that can prevent regional governments from becoming a legitimate level of government above local, state, provincial, and national levels, but just below the global level that is now emerging. Thus, one future possibility is a global government set up by means of regional government representation, with each continent or regional government being seated in a world legislature and in a world executive body.

One obvious way to start such a process would be by restructuring the UN Security Council. The first step would be to abolish the veto of the so-called permanent members (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States) that has rendered the UN so ineffective in the past. The veto would be replaced with the majority rule of the members of the Security Council themselves. The second step would be to expand the Security Council to include non-represented regions, thus making it into a representative microcosm of the world's major powers and regions. Britain and France, for example, would be represented under the EU, Arab states by the Arab League, African countries by the African Union, and Latin American countries by the Organization of the American States. In the end, all nations would be represented either by themselves, if they are large enough, or by a regional organization if they are small. This would allow China, the US, and Russia to remain on the Security Council but would give proportional representation to the rest of the world. In one fell swoop, such

reforms by the UN would help it gain respect as a truly global organization, as opposed to one that merely represents the developed countries. (It should be noted that the Council now includes ten rotating, non-permanent members who lack veto power. At the time of this writing the UN is considering a proposal to add six new permanent seats without veto power that would be allotted to two nations from Asia, two from Africa, one from Europe and one from the Americas.)

The technique of combining smaller countries into regions that have true representation on the Security Council would in turn encourage the development of regional supra-national governments with many secondary benefits accruing to these regions. This step of redesigning the Security Council might then set the stage for further changes to the structure of the UN that would lead to a new global constitution and the eventual adoption of measures equivalent to enforceable global law.

### **A union of democracies is a logical place to start**

It would seem only right that member nations of a democratic world government would themselves be democracies. It's a matter of common sense: If member nations are democratic and free of corruption, a federation of these nations will also be democratic and free of corruption. There is a direct correlation between peace, justice, the rule of law, and freely elected self-rule.

Thus, one viable way to move toward a governed world may well be that a group of democracies chooses to create a federation that is open to any country that meets minimal standards, much in the same way that the European Union has extended its federation to new countries in its region that

agree to the EU's human rights standards. The practical basis of this approach is that nations who share an explicit commitment to a common set of democratic values should find it easier to form a common supranational government.

The nations of today's world are obviously at various stages of political development, but most seem to be converging on a democratic standard of government; in fact, we've noted that the majority are now democracies. Of course, others remain mired in dictatorship or monarchy. Proponents of a "union of democracies" such as the Association to Unite the Democracies (AUD) make a logical case that we need not wait until all nations are democratic before we launch a constitutional global government—we already have a critical mass of democratic nations that could form the kernel of a world union. These member nations would gain entrance to the union if, for example, they can reliably demonstrate that they hold free elections. The democratization of the planet needs to be encouraged by enlightened progressives and the free peoples of the world. A global union of democracies that sets standards and provides assistance to non-members would greatly accelerate this process.

### **A worldwide constitutional convention is a plausible vehicle**

Another approach to creating a governed world would be to convene a world constitutional convention, as was once attempted in the 1950s and 1960s by the World Constitution and Parliament Association. A powerful joint call from respected world leaders might be enough to launch the unprecedented work of creating a global constitution to replace the UN Charter. Like the union of democracies discussed above, this variant would be rather bold in that it

would operate fully outside of the UN framework.

The call would specify that a constitutional convention should be convened in some world capital, such as Paris, Cairo, Beijing, Geneva, or New York, or rotate between them. At this grand meeting, the details of a proposed constitution would be hammered out by delegates or ambassadors sent from willing nations, regional groups, or representatives of an advisory world parliament—as outlined in chapter four. Delegates or advisors might even come from certain NGOs, from the world's religions, from professional associations, or from other civil society groups.

In response to the call, one could imagine that the world's greatest jurists, lawyers, politicians, and visionary social thinkers would convene with high fanfare. A great and historic debate would then begin. This would be similar to how the delegates to the American Constitutional Convention worked out the details of the American federal constitution through a series of compromises. Citizens' groups of all kinds and the world's media would no doubt offer input and be in observance during the process; their assertions of world public opinion would weigh heavily in the deliberations.

Such a new world constitution would be years or even a decade or two in the making. But once ratified by a critical mass of nations, it would one day become the founding document of a new democratic world order—and that date would forever be celebrated as “Constitution Day” for the planet!

A major problem to be faced by the world constitutional convention will be the system of representation, an issue we have broached earlier. Delegates from large countries would justly fear that small countries might obtain too large a

voice as they do today in the General Assembly; but the delegates from small countries might protest that their voices will be drowned out by a myriad of representatives from the larger powers in a system based on population. The Founding Fathers of the United States solved this dilemma with the so-called Great Compromise that led to our bicameral Congress (i.e., the Senate with two members from each state regardless of size, and the House whose representation is based on population in each state). The delegates to the world constitutional assembly would have to struggle to find a similar compromise. They would need to scrutinize the many voting models that have been proposed (such as Richard Hudson's Binding Triad<sup>1</sup>), or proposed global constitutions already in existence, and then creatively draft a fair system of power sharing based on a variety of factors, such as population and economic contribution.

Instituting checks and balances among different branches of the world government would, of course, be a central concern of the delegates to a world constitutional convention. These deliberations will prevent too much power from being concentrated in one branch or person. Libertarian thinkers and human rights activists will no doubt be on hand to ensure that the constitutional convention includes powerful safeguards against the danger of tyranny.

The framers of a new world constitution must also invent a new system of justice to promote enforceable global law. This system would build on existing treaty law, as well as the statutes of the ICC and the International Court of Justice, but also go far beyond current international law by creating a body of law that would apply *uniformly to all world citizens of the member-states*.

For this global enforcement system to work against rogue

states, surviving terrorist groups, or organized crime, the constitutional convention will need to debate the provisions governing a standing world military force. The constitution will have to give this force enough strength to settle large disputes, but not be so powerful as to create a potential threat to peace itself. If the world executive branch decided to enforce a decision of a world court or uphold an existing law, it would be the job of this world military force to back up the world marshals who would have the frontline duty of law enforcement. This may seem a daunting prospect, but compare this scenario with our current war system that includes nearly a trillion dollars per year spent worldwide to maintain the readiness of over a hundred national armies. This system of ritualized insanity would be replaced by a few hundred thousand “world policeman” and global soldiers who would preserve planetary law and order at a fraction of the cost.

Once the joint document is completed, nations would agree to a world government constitution and ratify it by voting for accession, similar to the way nations now join the European Union. They would then legally and formally transfer designated parts of their sovereign power upward, beginning with their “right” to make war. They would also agree to be bound by the decisions of world courts in dispute resolution.

It will take a great deal of effort and risk to achieve adherence to world law by all states, but the potential rewards are tremendous. For example, the first priority of a global government would be total elimination of nuclear weapons. It would achieve this goal worldwide in an organized manner by using the full power of law; the destruction of weapons would be verified by global inspectors.

The second priority would be the elimination of conventional war. This could be accomplished with binding dispute resolution, regulated disarmament, and a superior international UN security force for emergency situations. Nations would transfer both their right to make war and control of their national armies to the world legislature, which would then be the only body allowed to use military force across national borders. In the beginning of the development of global government, the federation might need to use force against non-member nations that engage in aggressive behavior. Nations that refused to join a global government could be persuaded to join by economic incentives and the protection provided by the rule of law.

Once all states have joined the federation, the need for military operations would become minimal. The world legislature or the world courts would be in a position to authorize any use of force required for the purpose of implementing a peace settlement or enforcing a court ruling.

A system based on world law will give everyone greater security than do the entire world's costly armies, navies, and air forces combined. Removing the burden of maintaining a military will provide tremendous economic benefits to every nation. For example, in 1948, following a civil war, Costa Rica announced that it no longer needed an army and it disbanded its military. Since then, the country has relied on the Organization of the American States and the Rio Treaty to protect it from invasion. Costa Rica has maintained its independence despite its location between two rather turbulent neighbors: Nicaragua and Panama. Costa Rica has the highest standard of living and one of the least corrupt governments of Latin America.

The two other examples of countries that were freed

from the burden of militarism are Japan and Germany. After their defeat in World War II, they wrote into their constitutions severe limits on military development and involvement. The Japanese constitution of 1947 went so far as to state that Japan “forever renounces war as a sovereign right of a nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.” Both countries are now among the most prosperous in the world.

Just imagine what the world could do if it were at peace. Nations could focus on free trade and consequently create a stronger global economy. Scientists could effectively address issues of population control, disease, and environmental damage. Governments could redirect precious resources from defense to ending world hunger. With so much of our precious time, energy, money, and intelligence no longer being wasted on war, we could create a much better world for ourselves and our descendants.

As more nations join the federation, the massive armaments the world now has will simply become obsolete. Of course, nations would retain an internal military force similar to the US National Guard to be used for disasters or civil unrest. A global federal government would have a common external policy to deal with nations outside of the federation, just as each state in America shares the one foreign policy set by the US federal government.

If the major nations of the world that control most of the military power joined a global government at its founding, then smaller, less powerful nations would soon follow. Failed states engaged in nation-building with the help of the new world community would automatically be inducted into the world federation. A stable nation could, in theory, exist outside of the union as long as it did not violate global law.

Eventually, all nations of the world would join of their own free will due to the numerous advantages of membership. They would quickly see how they would be protected from foreign invasion and terrorism by the power of the law backed by global government; they would be relieved of the burden of large military budgets; and they would gain the economic advantages of free trade and fewer restrictions within the governed area. These benefits would be similar to what a state in the US currently enjoys as part of the American federal union. Individuals within such a system would feel more secure and would enjoy greater freedom to travel and a wider range of economic options just as members of the European Union now experience.

This approach to building a global government will take time and years of debate and struggle. Nations may be reluctant to join and give up control over their military to an untried organization.

Wars in today's world are most frequently civil wars rather than violations of a border by one nation against another. Because the parties are not always nations, it is important that rebel groups have their cases heard in a world court. A court that has the power to settle disputes could end many of the world's current ongoing civil wars, such as the devastating conflicts now scarring Congo and Sudan in Africa.

The transition to effective global government based on a new constitution will require leadership and statesmanship on a level not previously experienced. It will not be an easy task to bring the world under the constitutional rule of law, but the option of remaining insecure under the anarchic war system is unacceptable.

## **The EU offers a historic model of a union of nations**

The creation of a global government may well be accomplished by expanding the European Union. This surprising idea makes sense for several reasons. Chief among these is that the EU is already accomplished in doing exactly what a global government would need to do: convincing nations to give up some of their sovereignty for the sake of something better.

With the evolution of the EU out of the ashes of WWII, Europe has, once again, shown us the way of the future. After inventing democracy in Athens 2,500 years ago, after giving us the Magna Charta and the system of national sovereignty created by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, after evolving the ideals of liberalism and humanism that culminated in the French and American revolutions, it has now created the supranational constitution. What has happened in Europe is not just a bureaucratic reshuffling; it is a revolution in human affairs.

From the beginning, the EU was envisioned by such leaders as Winston Churchill to be Europe's best method for preventing future wars in Europe. A French statesman named Jean Monnet, who is often referred to as "the father of Europe," was responsible for much of the original design and is credited with holding the vision. The EU has grown into a genuine political union of states with a directly elected parliament located in Brussels, Belgium and Strasbourg, France. Its budget of 100 billion dollars is generated from sales tax, and most of the Union now has a common currency: the euro.

Once a country joins the EU, its citizens are citizens of the Union and have the right to live and work in any of its member-countries, just as US citizens can live and work in any US state.

The EU moved in the 1990s from a complex system of treaties and law to a real constitutional government of Europe. The EU constitution's official motto is "Unity in Diversity." As we have noted, the EU constitution sets standards for membership, both economically and politically; for instance, it does not admit countries that support the death penalty.

One country after another has voted for accession to the union. The willingness to receive the benefits of supranational law has provided the key motivation. In May 2004, ten countries, mostly former Soviet bloc nations, became full members of the EU: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia, bringing the total membership to twenty-five. The EU had fifteen member-countries before the expansion. They were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The population of the EU is now 450 million, making it the third largest sovereign area after China and India.

It is not inconceivable that Russia and the other former Soviet republics may join as well. Turkey has applied for membership, which lends hope of expanding the Union into Muslim countries. Other countries that have strong ties to Europe, such as Australia, Canada, and Israel, may be candidates in the future.

With the addition of its new Eastern European members, the EU's gross national product is now seven trillion dollars, close to that of the US.<sup>1</sup> The EU is also developing a rapid-response joint military force that requires member nations to contribute toward maintaining a standing army of 50,000 to 60,000 troops that can be deployed for up to a year to deal with military threats around the world.<sup>2</sup> But this is a small

force compared to the US military; the EU, in general, has not militarized.

This new reign of international peace in Europe was achieved not at the end of the barrel of a gun, but through diplomacy and mutually agreed upon laws. Conflicts between old adversaries, such as France and Germany, which fought two world wars against each other, seem to have finally been put to rest. No one today even remotely thinks that France and Germany could fight one another again.

The peace achieved in Europe through the EU's experiment with supranational law is an outstanding model for world peace. The establishment of a united Europe and the attainment of peace between old adversaries set an example for the entire world. These achievements show the value of supranational law, cooperation, and diplomacy.

With regard to foreign policy, the EU does not yet speak with one voice. Each country is still free to set its own foreign policy. The constitution is not yet strong enough for a single foreign policy, as evidenced by the sharp split of opinion over joining the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The EU also does not yet have a common currency in all member countries. The EU is not yet fully a true federation, but significant power is shifting to the central government. It has followed the rallying call of "ever closer union" for years. The EU is in the process of evolving from a confederation to a federation.

As it expands, the EU will act as a force to support and reform the UN and, as noted earlier, the EU may move toward being a single voice in the UN. This would be done by consolidating the votes of the member-countries to one vote in the Security Council and by transferring the vetoes of Britain and France to the EU block. A common defense policy for the EU is developing and will need to be coordinated with NATO.

Some believe that expanding the European Union by opening it up to non-European countries would be a viable way to create a world government and would perhaps be easier than reforming the UN. The EU does not have the problem of veto power, and it maintains high standards for membership. The EU has been dynamic and evolving in its structure, unlike the UN, which has seen little reform to its Charter.

On the other hand, there is a major downside to going this route. It would most likely be many years before the majority of the nations of the world would join. This leaves open the risk that before the union is truly global, it would be challenged by another large, sovereign power, possibly leading to violent conflict.

On the other hand, a constitutional convention for creating a totally new global organization poses the same problem. Such a body could be started by as few as two countries willing to draft and ratify a constitution that would be open to all countries to join. After all, the EU began with only two countries that were buying steel and coal together, so anything is possible. A small group of brave countries could start a global federation without having to overcome all the obstacles they would encounter if they tried to do it through the UN, most notably the issue of the big power veto. But growth would likely be very slow, and the world's problems need urgent attention.

Given this reality, we believe that the best method of creating global government would probably be the remaking of the UN through a historic constitutional convention called from within the UN to reform its Charter. This would automatically involve most of the nations of the world and would avoid splitting the world into two or three sovereign units that

could fall into a war. Radical UN reform is the most efficient path because the existing machinery of the UN could itself be utilized in the transformation; otherwise a new organization must be created from the ground up—a slow and difficult process indeed. But can all this really be done in a reasonable amount of time?

### **Restructuring the United Nations is feasible and desirable**

In 1945, the UN was established with the hope of eliminating the scourge of war. Tragically, it was created without the power to accomplish that objective. The UN is not a government and can neither make nor enforce world law. The reason for its general lack of success at peacemaking lies in the fact that it has no leverage to control warring parties and no enforcement mechanism if nations or factions do not live up to their commitments.

Sixty years later, the UN urgently needs radical reform. The world is teeming with rogue states, terrorists, and other aggrieved parties who lack access to justice through enforceable global law—but *do* have access to weapons of mass destruction. Obviously, there are many other dire global issues that also must be addressed by a restructured UN. Convening a world constitutional convention to revise the UN Charter is a feasible and worthy long-term goal for any world-citizen activist. Barring that, certainly incremental reforms are needed now to avert disaster.

Under the original UN Charter, the Security Council was intended to be the UN's central decision-making body as well as its chief peacekeeping instrument. It can vote to condemn acts of aggression and impose sanctions, and in

theory it can vote to mobilize ad hoc military interventions, using a force comprised of troops assembled from member-countries. The General Assembly, which is made up of one representative from each country, can only pass resolutions that are essentially recommendations.

As we have noted, the Security Council is now made up of fifteen countries: the five permanent members who possess veto power, and ten other countries who rotate in every two years. The veto power of the permanent members—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China—provide the chief illustration of why the UN has become virtually obsolete in our dangerous times. Simply by virtue of being the victors of a war six decades past (and in the case of Russia and China, the successors of these victors), these five countries can, without appeal, block any resolution passed by the General Assembly or the Security Council. This tyrannical right of veto is an affront to the sovereignty of the people of the world and the democratic rights of world citizens, not to mention an insult to the rights of other member-nations of the UN. Today there are other great powers of roughly equal weight in the world in comparison to the permanent members of the Security Council, including India, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Spain, Indonesia, Korea, and Japan.

The ongoing dispute between Israel and the Palestinians provides perhaps the most egregious example of the debilitating power of the veto. For decades, and in overwhelming numbers, both the Security Council and the General Assembly have passed resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. All of these sincere initiatives for justice have been blocked by the US veto, thus contributing to the shameful inability of the UN to resolve this protracted

dispute that threatens world peace.

Thus far, the UN has used sanctions and limited military intervention to try to enforce the resolutions of the Security Council that pass without veto. UN sanctions are a very blunt instrument; all too often, they cause egregious suffering for the people of the target nation without directly impacting the offending government. Such was obviously the case when the UN instituted sanctions against Iraq. The military interventions of the UN have also been failures, by and large. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994, in which the UN and the international community completely failed to respond to the massacre of some 800,000 people, marks one of the lowest points in the UN's sad record of military diplomacy; one only need watch the film *Hotel Rwanda* to get a taste of the worst consequences of today's anarchic international system and the UN's impotence in the face of it. At the time of this writing, we are witnessing yet another rendition of African genocide, and yet another example of the UN's inability to save lives, in the Darfour region of Sudan. When will the world's people be willing to say that enough is enough?

What can we say on the positive side? The UN does play a role as a facilitator of communication among all nations. It provides a place where hostile countries can meet on neutral ground. Since its inception, the UN has mediated a number of minor disputes with success. It was recently able to resolve the long-standing conflict between East Timor and Indonesia, establishing East Timor as an independent state and member of the UN. However, the UN was powerless to prevent the original catastrophe in East Timor: After the illegal invasion and annexation of the island by Indonesia in 1975, with the covert support of the US, over 200,000 people (a third of the

population) died from massacre and forced starvation.

It is a tragedy of immense proportions that most such acts of aggression since the UN's establishment have gone unchecked and unpunished. One cause of the UN's weakness is the crippling veto; another is its lack of a standing army that can move quickly enough to prevent conflicts in the first place. The UN's so-called peacekeeping forces are normally called in to maintain the peace (or conditions of truce) once a military conflict has ended. But the weakness of UN peacekeeping was amply demonstrated by the events in 1995 at Srebrenica, Bosnia, where 400 lightly armed Dutch peacekeepers stood by as more than 7,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred after being forcefully removed from a UN "safe area."<sup>3</sup> This was the trigger for NATO's intervention, led by the US. A restructured UN will create a standing rapid-response force not dominated by any one nation or coalition, as was this NATO intervention and the first Gulf War in 1991.

The UN has also been a force for progress in international law, creating more than 35,000 treaties and related pieces of international law and over 500 multinational treaties.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps its best achievement in the area of security, as we have seen, has been the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which investigates and tries individuals accused of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

The ICC offers a more expedient way—in a world of anarchy—to deal with the most flagrant violations of "international law"; before its development, special ad hoc tribunals had to be established on a case-by-case basis. The development of the ICC is a positive step toward the development of supranational law and toward global government. But it is far from offering a genuine system of justice that can consistently

deliver and enforce binding decisions with each violation of law. The ICC offers an incremental improvement, but its American critics are not incorrect when they insist that this new court is easily politicized and could evolve in dangerous directions. We've already noted that the ICC lacks oversight from a world legislature and is not backed by the legitimacy of a constitutional world government that provides checks and balances on abuses of power.

For these and many other reasons that include the threat of global warming, there can be little doubt that radical restructuring of the UN may be the most important item on the world's agenda today—along with a grassroots movement for a global peoples' legislature. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan himself called for “radical reform” of the UN in 2003. He made this urgent call after the terrible bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, where the UN had come to be seen as a mere extension of an aggressive US policy. It is a bitter irony that Secretary Annan found himself later admitting on BBC Radio that he considered the US invasion of Iraq to be “illegal” and a “violation of the UN Charter.”

Below we recommend three fundamental reforms that we believe are feasible in the short run. Obviously, it remains to be seen what genuine reforms may actually grow out of the UN's credibility crisis, and who will lead the charge at this critical juncture.

### **A few critical reforms could transform the UN**

Part and parcel of the UN's credibility problem is its lack of basic standards for membership. Even the worst military dictatorships can be members, and are members; disturbingly,

such oppressive governments are even admitted to membership on the UN Human Rights Commission. No country has ever been expelled from the UN, even for the most heinous crimes of aggression. Highly undemocratic and even criminal regimes have an equal vote in the UN General Assembly along with every other member. Additionally, powerful nations like the US are able to manipulate the UN for their own advantage.

The first step in radically reforming the UN should be to require that all its voting members are countries that hold free elections and are not acting in violation of international law. Limiting the initial voting membership of the reformed organization to such governments has two benefits. First, the votes they cast will have a better chance of being representative of the will of the world community as opposed to the self-interest of a dictatorship or isolated oligarchy. Second, dictatorships and absolute monarchies will feel pressure to democratize in order to regain their influence in the UN and a position of prestige in world affairs. Economic incentives as well as election-monitoring assistance could help bring these countries closer to established democratic standards and eventual voting membership.

The second big step in reforming the UN is to give it the power to enforce its decisions fairly, uniformly, and swiftly. At a minimum, this new power would enable a restructured UN to intervene anywhere in the world to *prevent* civil wars and international conflicts from getting out of control. For example, the civil war in the Congo has taken over one million lives in the last four years, with little intervention by the UN or international community. Only the binding power of enforceable global law can be effective in regions that lack strategic significance; experience shows that most countries are

not motivated enough to intervene in such remote conflicts for strictly humanitarian reasons.

Sadly, where national sovereignty reigns supreme, national self-interest is usually the basis of any response to an international crisis. Under our current system in which self-interest is the highest level of concern, the moral obligation to alleviate human suffering ends at the border. Under a true system of global law, the world would respond immediately to any act of aggression—even in remote corners of the world. That's because law by its nature must be enforced uniformly all across the sovereign area, and because fundamental human rights are at stake. As a beginning incremental step toward this posture, a standing rapid-response force must be made available through the UN to intervene in such crises. Its military burden should be shared equally and financial costs evenly distributed.

The third step in reforming the UN is to make the body at least nominally democratic. As we have noted, the veto power must be removed. In addition, the UN needs a new system of voting. If democracy is to be expanded to the global level, voting power must be based at least in part on the number of people represented. Under the current UN system in the General Assembly, each country has one vote. That means that India, with over a billion people, has the same voting power as Iceland, with just over a quarter of a million people. Many practical proposals for weighted voting are currently on the table of policymakers. Political pressure from a provisional or advisory world legislature could also mightily move this type of reform along.

The fourth critical reform is the establishment of a UN tax base that drastically increases the budget of the UN. The UN needs a system of mandatory taxes that can provide a

steady stream of income that is not subject to tampering by countries with political agendas. The current budget of eleven billion dollars per year is a pittance compared to a world military budget approaching one trillion dollars per year.

Can the UN be reformed to become a real supranational government—or is a totally new organization needed? It is possible to reform the UN, but it will not be easy. The UN Charter states that amending the charter requires a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly and the approval of all five permanent Security Council members. That is a tough but not insurmountable obstacle. The charter was amended in 1965 to increase the number of countries on the Security Council from eleven to fifteen. The countries with veto power will give up their control only when they are put under pressure from the rest of the world and when they become aware of the advantages in doing so.

There are great benefits to using the groundwork that has been laid by the UN to create a democratic world-governing body. First, it has respect as the most recognizable international institution. Second, the vast logistical challenge of going around it to form another organization seems less likely to succeed.

There have been many calls down through the years for UN reform by member-countries and NGOs, but few have gone so far as to ask for the reforms that have just been described—a democratic overhaul of the organization with changes to the power structure and the establishment of a tax base and a standing army.

We believe that the quickest, least risky, and most legitimate path to this overhaul would be for a group of nations to call for a constitutional convention of all UN members, for citizens' groups to support this call with a worldwide

campaign of education and agitation, and through the organization of an ad hoc world peoples' assembly or world legislature. This method would be much faster than, for example, adding one or two members at a time to a regional government such as the EU, or starting over from scratch with a convention outside the UN—and speedy reform is now essential. The UN route would be less risky because it would include the overwhelming majority of nations right from the start.

### **An opportunity like no other stands before us**

Some may proclaim that the world is not ready for the drastic changes discussed in this chapter; they will assert that any such transformation is unlikely to occur anytime soon. To them we reply that the world has never been more ready and that global government is our only option if we are to avoid catastrophe.

The UN Charter was signed six weeks before Hiroshima was destroyed by a nuclear explosion. Had the UN been created *after* the first use of atomic weapons, its structure might have been different; most likely nuclear weapons would have been put under international control, as was almost accomplished by the famous Baruch Plan in 1946. We cannot change history, but we can make our generation's contribution to history by, at a minimum, placing nuclear weapons under international control.

There is a continual upward evolution of the moral fabric of society. No longer do we find infanticide, cannibalism, or slavery to be morally acceptable. These practices have been outlawed in every nation of the world. The next step in this moral evolution of humankind is the abolition of war.

Let us not be slaves to our savage past. War is morally wrong; war is the greatest of all evils; now a viable alternative to war exists. And now an effective alternative to global environmental destruction exists.

The opportunity now before us is unique to our generation. The abolition of war is now within our grasp. We must demand the most basic human right of all, the right to exist and to be free of the threat of war. We must enlarge our idea of patriotism to include our duty to the planet and humanity, not just our country.

*I pledge allegiance to the Earth, and to the planet for which it stands; one world, under law, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*

—Martin Hayes

