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Putting Life into the United Nations

Despite the magnificent progress achieved by human civilization over the past few centuries, based on advances in science and technology, the stark reality remains that humankind today faces existential challenges such as the population explosion, depletion of natural resources, climate change, the spread of WMDs, drones and cyber-warfare, accelerating wealth inequalities both within and amongst nations, and the recent rise of extremism and fundamentalism leading towards mass migrations.

Despite near-universal acknowledgement of these challenges and talk of the need for remedial steps, precious little meaningful action has been taken. The global pundits' cry for change has no clear articulation of the direction for such change. It is limited in scope and misses the fundamental need for a paradigm shift in the attitudes and values required to meet the massive challenges of the future: treating humans as one brotherhood, through the gradual replacement of nationalism by universalism.

This led the author to think that our goal for the future of humankind should be — more appropriately, even if a little ambitiously — how to "thrive in the future rather than merely survive".

The focus has invariably been either on a national-security paradigm or on obtaining a market advantage and competitive edge for the corporations concerned, forgetting that "technical fixes" alone are woefully incapable of meeting these existential challenges. Such "business as usual" and "more of the same technological solutions" will not work in the future. It does not matter if we drive on the right side of the road in the USA and Europe and on the left in the former British Commonwealth countries, but up in the air or on the sea such diversity of laws becomes impractical. It follows that in a globalized world we will ultimately all have to abide by one set of values, laws and rules if we want to avoid inevitable deadly conflicts.

But all such approaches hit a glass ceiling when it comes to delineating an overall, holistic, brass-tacks approach to optimizing the human condition on the planet, because they are essentially either "technical fixes", "business as usual — more of the same", or of a "subjective nature" applicable to individuals or limited interests and not to the whole of mankind. The originality of this proposal lies not in "where we are headed" but in "where we should be headed".

The issue before us, then, is to identify the new level of consciousness and its contours as far as possible. Such an effort will be grounded in supporting evidence and reason. The hallmark of this proposal is to convert the new paradigm directly into policies to be formulated by world leaders in the global space, positively impacting the collective well-being of the planet.

Proposals

1. The UN to have its own source of funds, by transferring ownership of the following resources to a reformed UN: the continent of Antarctica; the deeper parts of the world's oceans, beyond existing territorial claims; Earth orbits, especially the geosynchronous orbit used by communication satellites; and the Moon and the planets (perhaps even fresh water and air).

2. The UN to have suo motu authority to take up any case, whether or not the parties concerned want it, limited to issues of vital concern to the world.

3. The UN to have a judicial rather than simply a recommendatory role, moving towards world government with the ability to implement its decisions.

4. The UN to have its own police and paramilitary force to enforce its joint decisions.

5. Move gradually towards a World Parliament elected on adult franchise.

6. A well-defined system for accelerating the development of the economically lagging parts of the world — without burdening or pulling down the developed world — with an early balance as the goal.

7. The goal of the UN bureaucracy to be "service to humanity" (perhaps along the lines of the Kennedys' Peace Corps, or the kibbutz), and not just a cushy retirement.

8. Improvement and upgrading of the UN Secretariat, with a gradually more proactive agenda and capabilities focused not just on surviving but on thriving under the new model of world governance.

Most importantly, these steps should be accompanied by the formation of a "Sages' Council" of universally minded, accomplished individuals with proven track records, to advise a competent, proactive and effective Secretary-General — with a view to balancing, and ultimately replacing, the distortions of the present Security Council's discriminatory, outdated and unfair veto system.

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