



Sovereign Nation-States and Global Leadership

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Abstract

A novel global governance and leadership paradigm is proposed.

Survival of humanity demands paradigmatic changes. Saving natural and human capital requires new economic and new political paradigms. We focus here on political paradigm change. The world today **can be** destroyed in less than a day by error, terror and stupidity. We know that the world and its natural and human capital **will be** destroyed in about ten years, unless we change our economic, political and social paradigms. Humankind is entering a phase of continuous paradigmatic changes—some beneficial but some disruptive and destructive and we have to change our mindset, notably our political paradigm. We have at most about ten years, and pandemics, such as COVID-19, can make it even shorter. It is necessary that the paradigm change is accomplished within that time interval. This is almost an oxymoron: profound change simultaneously carried out within a short time interval. The last two decades were the best time ever, but our world is vulnerable and unsustainable and self-destructive. The next decade has a 20% chance to be the worst time ever.

Present international political structure is based on sovereign nation states (SNS): UN and all its affiliated organizations, as well as G20 and G8 fall under this category. The EU depends on SNS. There are about 300 inter-governmental organizations like these. Even those that appear to be focused on well specified topics, such as OPCW, CTBTO, IAEA, ILO, WMO and WHO, as well as the Bretton Woods structure, strongly depend on SNS. All treaties depend on SNS sometimes requiring agreement on some 'more equal than others'. The UN Security Council is composed of unequal SNS—only a few having veto power. This structure was developed at the time of the Westphalia treaty which marked the end of the Thirty-years war in 1648, and received its present form after WWII. The 17th century world and even the world in the mid-20th century was profoundly different from today and tomorrow will be even more different and this will keep changing.

Humankind is faced with a multitude of challenges—global and local and these challenges keep changing. Naturally, all available resources are required. Consequently, governance and politics cannot be reduced to an 'elite' as it was reduced in Ancient Greece and even during the founding of the USA: women were not involved in politics and nor were slaves. It is curious that in old Greek, the word 'idiot' (ἰδιώτης) describes a selfish person, one not interested in politics and having no social involvement (ἰδιότης). Governance and politics today have to be participatory. Many challenges and participants require communications

and closeness between individuals and ‘decision-makers’. This task is more complex as one forms international, global associations particularly if they depend on the pyramidal structure, e.g. if global governance is formed from ‘continents’ and ‘continents’ from SNS. Contemporary world is fast changing and interdependent. This demands governance to be flexible and anticipatory. It is desirable, almost necessary, that decision-makers and all citizens understand fast changes and even participate in them. Complexity of challenges makes this requirement impossible. An elite group of ‘decision-makers’ is formed and its members are not usually the best the society can offer.

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Most real problems are global: pollution, climate change, infectious diseases, sixth global extinction, unemployment and staggering inequality. The present world is global, while the system based on SNS is not global. Does it have the capacity to generate necessary global leadership? If so, how? As I stressed earlier, the structure based on SNS was developed for the world that was not global and we would be very lucky if it is adequate for a global world. However, how is the structure of SNS coping with issues that are not predominantly global—peace and stability, efficiency of government, and leading their countries in the right direction? (see Table 1).

Table 1: Government Efficiency

Country	Government is efficient	Government respects the will of the people	Government leads in the right direction
Austria	19%	28%	23%
Croatia	10%	7%	11%
Germany	29%	29%	34%
UK	25%	30%	27%
USA	20%	21%	19%

Data in Table 1 is based on recent polls, but similar results have been obtained for the last four decades. Table 1 shows that the governance based on SNS is not adequate even for addressing the tasks it was designed to address and solve. This is not surprising since the current world is so different from what it was even 50 years ago. Let us emphasize just three major differences.

- **First**, the wealth of extremely rich individuals and multinational companies is comparable to the GDP of medium size countries. They act in the political arena by significantly

modifying actions of SNS and act without accountability except in some cases to their shareholders.

- **Second**, salient features of our current world are generated and will continue to be generated mainly by science and technology. Though scientists and engineers occasionally have prominent political roles, and rarely are some outstanding politicians very creative and knowledgeable, most scientists and engineers are only employees in the service of their national government or of companies. When President Kennedy entertained several Nobel laureates, he said, “This is the highest concentration of brain in the White House, except when Thomas Jefferson had dinner alone.” Albert Einstein was politically very active: he refused to sign the Memorandum asking German scientists to support the Kaiser during the WWI; he wrote a famous letter to President Roosevelt to initiate the nuclear bomb development and was the coauthor of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. Nevertheless, Ben Gurion was relieved when Einstein refused to become President of Israel. Is it necessary to improve the SNS governance on the level of SNS before proceeding to address global problems? Again, we just do not have the time.
- **Third**, in April 2020 commenting about our R&D and social actions concerning COVID-19, Jürgen Habermas claimed that “never before have so much been known about what we do not know.” During the last few decades, many studies on uncertainty have been published [Slaus, 2020]. We have been accustomed to expect that knowledge production reduces uncertainty. As Latour [Latour, 1998] and Drosten emphasized, science does not enter a chaotic society to create order. It enters to add new uncertain ingredients. The recent history of COVID-19 displays the complexity of interconnection between research and society [Leonhardt et al., 2020].

It is often stressed that free and fair elections are the pillars of democracy, though the founding fathers of the US, especially Madison, warned against majoritarianism. They underlined the importance of checks and balances. Free and fair elections can be realized and led to at least four rather different forms [Pew Research Center, 2017] as shown in Table 2:

*Table 2: Free and Fair elections can be realized and can produce
[Pew Research Center, 2017]*

Country	Representative	Direct Democ.	Rules by experts	Rule by strong leaders
USA	86%	67%	40%	22%
Germany	90%	74%	44%	6%
India	75%	76%	65%	55%
Japan	77%	65%	49%	31%
Russian F.	68%	74%	68%	48%
World	78%	68%	44%	26%

Besides being free and fair, elections have to address important and urgent issues and should offer choices: different programs and persons that are competent and honest. Aristotle claimed that politics is the master science, implying that it is most important and most difficult. Any profession requires extensive studies and often additional studies and re-examinations to keep abreast of development of the field. For decision-makers and rulers it seems that it is enough to be elected. Donald Michaels, member of the Club of Rome, wrote a paper titled ‘Can leaders tell the truth and still remain leaders?’ on this. A YouGov opinion poll of British voters in 2012 found that 62% of those that responded think politicians tell lies all the time and a recent NY Times article claims that presidents lie, some of them 50 times more than average [Leonhardt et al., 2017]. Rapid development of science and technology makes education of ruling groups sub-mediocre, worse than ever in history. A usual correction is to introduce excellent advisors. However, would you board a bus driven by a person who only knows how to drive a cart but is advised by a knowledgeable driver? The role of advisors is often to form a screen to cover wrong and biased decisions by rulers. The broad range of science and technology demands experts in many different areas. Rulers are often led by parochial needs and interests. Even when they and everybody else know what actually the overwhelming majority of people want and what is good for their country, rulers do the opposite if that increases their prospects in the elections or in strengthening their parties.

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These analyses demonstrate that the current type of governance has to be modified. Not a great revelation. The Declaration of Independence states: “Whenever any form of government becomes destructive, it is the right of the people to alter it or to abolish it.” The founding fathers of the EU and of the Pugwash Movement are even more critical of the SNS. We are now faced with a deadly pandemic. The number of deaths in the first half-year of 2020 have been over 500,000 due to COVID-19, 300,000 due to suicide, 500,000 due to road accidents and 2.5 million due to stroke. It is necessary to be very careful in interpreting these numbers. First, data shows that COVID-19 is more deadly than SARS, H1N1, MERS and Ebola combined. COVID-19 spreads quickly and these numbers could turn out to be 2-3 times incorrect, which increases COVID-19’s effects. Nevertheless, it will still be much lower than deaths caused by heart attack, stroke and cancer, and so we could be complacent. However, in an interdependent global world, everything is connected, some more non-linearly and with higher speed. COVID-19 causes dramatic economic crises and it could even trigger WWIII. [Walt, 2020] COVID-19 has generated an enormous psychological effect. COVID-19 has highlighted many of the worst features of the SNS system: selfishness, propaganda and display of characteristics typical of ‘the old tools’ as if it were another enemy that can be destroyed.

The present structure based on SNS has many shortcomings, but they had and have to be credited for stability and development of culture, notably science. Eliminating SNS' structure is neither desirable nor possible since it is the true basis of power. Likely the new political, economic and social paradigm will significantly modify the SNS structure, but now we do not have even the elementary idea of what that new paradigm is and should be. We only know it has to be human-based and humanity-based: it is our survival. We claim that sooner or later science will overcome COVID-19, as it did many other infectious diseases. Unfortunately, more than a few months, possibly years, are involved. More threateningly, COVID-19 can have successors, some even deadlier. We turn to numbers: The WWI had about 20 million casualties, WWII about 60 million, the Spanish (actually Kansas) flu about 80 million and the 20th century democide between 100 and 200 million. During 1992-2013, 423 million died due to hunger. COVID-19 will produce about 10-20% decrease in national GDPs. We estimate the second COVID-19 wave in the Fall. We have no idea of its strength. We hope we are better prepared. Interdependent consequences of COVID-19 will appear, notably as economic crises. Our experience of the 1929 and 2008 crises indicates that we have about a year. Dominant tenor of SNS rulers is: "return to normal", possibly 'new normal'. So far we have seen only increasing destructions of natural and human capital. COVID-19 is not a punishment, nor an indicator that some systems are better than the others (though there are such trends), but it is an essential warning. The world we lived in the first and second decades of the 21st century was the best ever, but self-destructing and unsustainable. Therefore, it is crucial that we do not return to the 'old normal' and we have about a year to accomplish this task. We do not have role-models, but have experience. We know that the SNS structure has to be modified. We have many successful international treaties and many fairly good international/intergovernmental organizations. We realize that concentration of power is neither good, nor do citizens want it (see Table 2). Experts are not significantly better assessed (Table 2) and we know the reasons. Based on all these experiences we propose to modify the SNS structure in the following way:

The decision-making in domains strongly influenced by science and technology has to rest on experts not influenced by SNS, i.e. not nominated by their countries but by independent organizations such as: Inter-Academy Panel, International Association of Universities, TWAS, WAAS, SAPEA, GYA, Latin American and African academies, representatives of trade unions and businesses (as ILO). For example, nuclear issues—civilian and military (e.g. Iran nuclear deal) should be under the control and decision of IAEA, OCTBT, Pugwash, concerned scientists, and many other associations that received Nobel Prize for their peace efforts. Similarly, for health issues the decision group should include health care experts, WHO, UNESCO, ECOSOC and also economists. None of the decision-making bodies should be official representatives of SNS. Such bodies are by design specialty-narrow, while the world is interdependent and it is necessary to include holistic and trans-disciplinary aspects. The role and the duty of SNS representatives—and these include elected 'politicians' and diplomats—are to be advisors to each and all of these expert bodies, always through arguments, never by force or veto. Now we will look into the advantages and shortcomings of this approach.

Advantages: the structure of SNS remains as it is, but their global role (which anyway does not exist except by rude force) has been replaced by competent bodies. These bodies resemble science and health care, and these two activities have been assessed by the public to be the best we have, much better than parliaments, executive branch, judiciary and media. The SNS will gradually learn what their true role is not just globally but also locally within their countries. For instance, decisions of the body dealing with R&D should require that each SNS allocate at least 3% of their GDP to R&D. Decision of the body dealing with nuclear civilian and military aspects to maintain the Iran nuclear deal should be obligatory even for SNS that—because of various reasons—would like to withdraw from the deal. We already have organizations that can act as the nuclei of such expert bodies, e.g. ILO, UNESCO, WHO etc. This novel structure can be implemented quite fast, and step by step. I listed above three cases: nuclear, R&D and health. It would be prudent to add something like the Environmental Security Council, a proposal made 30 years ago, and recently repeated. Since elected representatives of SNS do not have absolute power, as they have today, the very process of election can be conducted with legitimacy. Each domain can and will develop independently. It is obvious that this model is in formation, and it can be designed as a flexible and self-learning model.

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