Can We Overcome the Global Crisis: Obstacles, Options, and Opportunities

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Living Together on the Planet

Jacques Derrida in an essay resonant with implications asks the central question as to ‘how we might live together well on this planet.’ He notes that the global circumstance establishes an unavoidable condition of living together, whether justly or unjustly, peacefully or belligerently, prudently or imprudently. It is a matter of historical interpretation how human societies have lived together in the past, even when not in direct contact. The developments in transportation, communications, and organization over the course of the last few centuries have altered our sense for better and worse of what it means, and might mean, to live together. I think it is not controversial to conclude that the human species has never managed to live together well, although certainly some periods are clearly worse than others. Whether humans have the capacity to live together well even in small communities is certainly open question, with a skeptical response seeming to follow from any comprehensive look at past history.

The utopian tradition has tried to supply visions of how the collective life of the species might be enhanced, and is in one important respect an imaginative response to the Derrida challenge. The most abiding vision of utopia is based on the establishment of relatively small communities that establish their own ethos usually based on principles of equality, modesty of life style, and nonviolence. Such a mode of planetary living together is paradoxically based on living apart, and not needing to shape social responses to outside pressures brought about by scarcities or demands associated with an overarching commitment to the wellbeing and harmony of the species as a whole.

There is a second tradition of utopian political thought that is convinced that living together tolerably well presumes, perhaps necessitates, political unification generally taking the form of world government. There is the belief that current political divisions, accompanied by the reality of autonomous sovereign states, generates conflict and warfare. This understanding of the global situation has led some to believe that the fundamental obstacle to living together is this governmental deficit that can be addressed by establishing stronger global institutions capable of upholding international law, especially on matters of peace and security.

A third tradition of utopian thought emphasized the aftermath of colonialism as creating a new development agenda that would address issues of poverty and global inequality, especially emphasizing the emergence of non-Western societies
and the establishment of a more cosmopolitan and egalitarian ethos of world order.\textsuperscript{vi}

In the modern period, these utopian strivings have never achieved the status of a political project. The dominant tradition of theorizing has been reconciled to the persistence of a state-centric world order in which hopes are pinned on moderation, cooperation for mutual benefit, countervailing or balanced power, and above all, prudence on the part of the main power-wielders.\textsuperscript{vii} A cruder version of such perspectives is associated with the fatalistic traditions of political realism that views war and its prevention as the main drivers of history in a human setting in which individuals and states pursue their self-interest by rational means, but without heeding the constraining impacts of law and morality.\textsuperscript{viii} The best that human society can do is to build a fragile form of sustainable world that provides security for the dominant states on the basis of a mixture of fear and threat. This kind of living together is very much the narrative of the present, and reflects the effects and character of technological innovation on the organization of war and peace.

More than two centuries ago Immanuel Kant authored an essay entitled ‘Perpetual Peace’ in which he envisioned a world of states that did find a way to reconcile the persistence of states as the fundamental form of political community with the vision of a warless world. His ‘democratic peace’ theory was based on the spread of republican democracy, reinforced by demilitarization, the binding ties of commerce, and a spirit of hospitality toward strangers.\textsuperscript{ix} As Doyle points out democracies seem disposed not to wage war against other democracies, but they are quite often ready to commit aggression against non-democratic adversaries. The appeal of this Kantian path is that it both does not require reliance on an all-powerful world state and that it relates a peaceful world to the establishment of humane governance within territorial communities.

Some argue, and I would situate myself among them, that the advent of nuclear weaponry, exposed an apocalyptic facet of the intolerability of living together in a world dominated by sovereign states.\textsuperscript{x} Even before nuclear weaponry, the destructiveness of warfare made many question whether the war system of security was any longer morally tolerable. What nuclear weaponry did was to raise the more fundamental question of whether such a state-centric system was sustainable, as well as intolerable.\textsuperscript{xi} This question is posed more pointedly by the prospects of catastrophic climate change arising from the buildup over time of greenhouse gasses in the earth’s atmosphere.\textsuperscript{xii} In both instances, there exists an option of renouncing nuclear weaponry and regulating emissions associated with industrial activities, but despite the recognition of the gravity of the threats to the human future, there is absent the political will required to make the adjustments. If this is so, a space traveler from elsewhere in the universe may someday write an epitaph for the species: ‘unable to live together any longer.’

I am not prepared to accept such a discouraging reading of the future, and do maintain that human society can learn to manage its problems tolerably and
sustainably, but only if certain fundamental adjustments are made. These aspirations fall somewhat short of Derrida's ambitious framing of the question, but not as much as it might appear. It will not be possible to achieve a world without nuclear weapons and massive poverty or to address climate change responsibly without finding alternate ways of living together individually and collectively other those that are associated with modernity, Western consumerism, and the linkage of security and war. In effect, to respond effectively to horizons of necessity that constitute the crux of the deepening global crisis will depend on the serious political responsiveness to horizons of desire. In this understanding, horizons of feasibility (politics as the art of the possible) are declared to be irrelevant or worse, a smokescreen that obscures the severity of the challenges to standard modes of operation. Only a politics of impossibility premised on necessity and desire can offer hope for living together well enough to overcome the intolerable aspects of the present and unsustainable prospects of the anticipated future.

In effect, then, the question of living together well becomes a normative inquiry as well as an empirical one. We can no longer be confident of living together at all unless we can learn to live together better, even if not well. This is a new defining feature of the human condition in the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century, and has never existed before, at least in modern times where only fragments of the whole faced survival threats. Such threats dwell in a domain of uncertainty as to their magnitude and probability, and efforts at quantification are misleading. What will count is whether a reframing of political life can find ways to reduce risks of catastrophic disruption from human causes.

That is, it is no longer adequate for scholars and policymakers to explain how the state-centric or Westphalian System operates in its current historical phase, including providing some recommendations to enhance peace, stability, and justice. What is needed now is a set of structural and normative changes that cannot be brought without a paradigm shift that is an expression of what might be best understood as a postmodern global imaginary. This postmodern imaginary would exhibit a reorienting of political consciousness to take much fuller account of the wellbeing of the \textit{whole} (the world) as well as remaining attentive to the viewpoints of the \textit{parts} (sovereign states). The modern imaginary is dominated by the goals and values of those who represent sovereign states, which is expressed in foreign policy by the privileging of national interests and transnational capital efficiency, as well as by extremely weak mechanisms for promoting collective goods. This modern imaginary has its \textit{horizontal} dimension premised on the juridical equality of states in interaction with the \textit{vertical} dimension premised on the geopolitical inequality of states.

Reconfiguring the Global Imaginary: A Postmodern Paradigm

As suggested, the study and practice of world politics as perceived by the modern state-centric paradigm is increasingly dysfunctional from the perspective of
long-term sustainability. On this basis, the current crisis in global policymaking and problem solving is essentially insoluble. To begin the process of thought outside this anachronistic realist box requires the ‘as if’ postulation of an alternative paradigm more reflective of globalizing developments and challenges.

From empirical to normative cognitive mapping. The political understanding of the world continues to be mainly shaped by the modern paradigm that is derived from the anarchical premises of state-centricism. There were two versions: the dominant notion of sovereign territorial states as exclusively constitutive of world order for the indefinite future; the secondary idea that although states remained the most significant source of order and power, there was taking place a slow evolution toward a more complex reality in which civilizations, regions, and international institutions played a growing role in accommodating complexity, interdependence, and fragility of the contemporary world.

The insufficiency of this modern paradigm is associated with its underestimation of the scope and depth of global scale challenges, and with the related inability of the modern paradigm to generate solutions that are responsive to personal and collective goals of sustainability, stability, spirituality, and equity. Positing an alternative postmodern paradigm then is defined by reference to filling this gap between what ‘is’ and what ‘is needed,’ which is essentially a capability to shape and implement policies that serve the common and most enduring interests and desires of humanity. Without such a capability the challenges posed by the possession of nuclear weaponry, climate change, world economy, massive poverty, and others cannot be met. This is, then, a normative assessment that the mechanisms presently operative within a state-centric world order will fail unless supplemented in coming decades by a more geo-centric world order.

From borders to limits. The modern paradigm that continues to shape our thought and policy on global issues perceives problems and challenges through a state-centric optic that is preoccupied with bounded territorial space. The rather simple ordering logic associated with this optic is that the territorial sovereign is exclusively autonomous within its borders, and that in those spaces that are not territorial—oceans and space—there is complete freedom to use limited only by the duty to respect the freedom of others. There are two assumptions that are built into this modern allocation of formal authority to govern. The first is that what the state does territorially will not cause serious harm elsewhere, and therefore its governance policies are not subject to any international restrictions on its freedom of action other than those to which it has given consent. The second is that the claims to act in the global commons can all be accommodated, that a condition of abundance exists. Reducing this conception of world order to its essential properties implied unlimited authority within states, unlimited freedom outside states. Borders were the defining reality. Of course, there were complications that made the total picture less clear: the inequality of states, discretionary warfare, polar regions, 200 mile exclusive economic zones. And yet the maps that imaged political reality and were inscribed in political consciousness, and given expression...
in the rules and principles of international law, reflected this fundamental picture of a world of borders separating sovereign territorial entities. Border management sought control over entry and exit, and citizenship and nationalist ideologies generated bonds between governments and people within these territorial enclosures.

From the middle of the last century this kind of fragmentation of the earth became increasingly problematic in multiple respects. Perhaps, most dramatically, it is possible to anchor the argument in two cataclysmic happenings: the Holocaust brought about by the savagery of Nazi genocide; the atomic bombings of Japanese cities at the end of World War II. What these happenings demonstrated was the unacceptability of relying on the logic of state-centricism, and the need for limits. In response, gestures were made to acknowledge this perception. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights implied the view, although without enforcement prospects, that the internal governance of states was subject to specified limits, and if these were exceeded, then respect for sovereignty was at risk. Similarly, proposals for nuclear disarmament were premised on the need to rid the world of such ultimate weaponry, and if not, to put severe limits on the right to use even if the security of the state was at stake.\textsuperscript{xix}

With the advent of globalization, the rise of mega-terrorism, and climate change concerns, this emphasis on limits, and the claims of a borderless world have greatly increased in relevance. It is my assessment that it has become appropriate to contend that only an optic that can comprehend the global interest and the human interest is compatible with sustainability and any hope for achieving a world order that is more peaceful and just. Such a position implies a paradigm shift in prevailing political consciousness that is urgently needed, yet not at all likely to reshape behavior for the foreseeable future. This gap between what is needed and what is likely is disguised by denial, extremism, and various forms of escapism, and so the peoples of the world are exposed to intensifying risks of expanding magnitudes.

Such a pessimistic conclusion is supported by the continued vitality of state-centric decision-making in relation to global policy. As a result, the limit conditions that should be providing the guidelines for sustainable and acceptable behavior are consistently ignored. Statist logic continues to prevail whether it is a matter of regulating the activities of the global marketplace, prohibiting reliance on nuclear weapons for state security, restricting carbon emissions, or preventing genocidal behavior. The dominant states are particularly myopic, having been long accustomed to pursuing their interests without any systemic constraints. And this statist logic, with the instruments at the disposal of governments, acknowledges the problems but is at a loss to find viable solutions. Instead, what is done is to test limits in ways that pose devastating dangers for the future, including drone technology, cyberwarfare, neoliberal global economics, fracking for natural gas and deep sea drilling for oil, genetically modified foods, population growth, and per capita and aggregate economic growth. These ‘fixes’ are based on the practices and worldview of states, as enhanced by technological innovation and guided by
materialist ambitions, and despite their poor results and manifest warnings are unlikely to be superseded anytime soon by any concerted attempt to base global policy on the human interest.\textsuperscript{xxi}

From citizen to global citizen to citizen pilgrim. The paradigm shift must also engage individuals and reshape the societal ethos. At present, the typical citizen is socialized by reference to a nationalist ideology, which aligns a citizen’s perspective with a national interest perspective on global policy issues. Such an orientation creates a political climate in which governmental actors, especially in democratic societies, need to act to minimize burdens and maximize benefits in all international transactions. This code of conduct is reinforced by the ideals of patriotism, the primacy of national security, and the criminalization of treason.

These behavioral features are deeply embedded in the state-centric structure are to an extent challenged by assertions of ‘global citizenship.’ To be sure, global citizenship can have many points of reference, but the commonality among these, is a sense of belonging to the world as much as belonging to the nation and state. It is possible to imagine, although not easy to conceive of it happening, the enfranchising the people of the world to cast votes in American elections as an appropriate recognition of the extent that what happens in the United States impacts on societies throughout the world. The notion of global citizenship is consistent with a spatial conception of world order, but it is less responsive to a global setting in which limit conditions are situated in the future, making time a crucial component of an adaptive consciousness.

For this reason I have advocated in recent years that the most constructive way to situate citizenship in our historic moment is by reference to the idea of ‘citizen pilgrim.’\textsuperscript{xxii} The emphasis here is on a journey, as in a pilgrimage, to a future situation that overcomes the torments of present and impending realities. A citizen pilgrim is conscious of the dimension of time, and also of globalized space, in exhibiting her dedication to overcoming the multifaceted challenges of the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century by reliance on the human interest.

From part to whole. Implicit in this whole argument about a paradigm shift is the centrality of grasping what it means for the future of world politics to be able to assert in many context for the first time in human history that ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’ For the modern period an identifying feature of the system was to acknowledge that ‘the sum of the parts was far greater than the whole,’ and for most purposes there was no meaningful content for any claim suggesting the primacy of the global or the human in achieving a problem-solving solution. As argued the frustrating failures to shape satisfactory solutions for a series of global problems is due to a continuing dependence on state-centric mechanisms. That is, the problem-solving and policy-forming frameworks are dominated by states, and their calculations of national advantage and priorities. In certain settings, these frameworks can produce outcomes consistent with the
human interests as when states bargain or compromise to achieve mutual interests. Where the perceptions of interest and the situation of actors is uneven, then there is no path to reach an agreement.

In some settings, corporate and financial perceptions are geared by the globalization of market forces, and these can influence to a significant degree the outlook of governmental actors. It would seem that the global economy is administered in accord with the global economic interests of the private sector in promoting the efficiency of capital. Even if this were true, and there are many deviations due to the play of economic forces and the varying susceptibility to such influences by governments, the results are far from serving the human interest in either long-term sustainability or short-term equity and human security.

To make the paradigm shift operative behaviorally will require expanding the mandate and capabilities of global institutions. It will also require detaching these institutions from their current subordination to geopolitical forces associated with the vertical dimensions of state-centricism. The UN System can perhaps be modified in structure and operating procedures to allow this transition from an organization serving the interests of sovereign states to one that serves the human interests by adopting the outlook of the whole. Among the concrete steps that would advance these goals are the following: the establishment of a popularly elected global parliament charged with advising on the human interest; a global source of revenue from some transnational activity, such as international air travel or luxury goods duty; a global peace force tasked with responses to natural disasters and impending or unfolding humanitarian catastrophes that is trained to pursue nonviolent methods of conflict management and resolution. The idea behind this package of illustrative moves is intended to show what might be involved in making the global center strong enough to serve the human interest, and overcome the continuing obstacles arising from both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of state-centricism.

From ‘realism’ to ‘global realism.’ This proposed reorientation of perspective presupposes an altered understanding of political reality. The persisting attachment to ‘realism’ is premised on the agency of hard power capabilities in relation to security and statist perspectives with regard to policy formation with due recognition of the inequality of states in exerting influence. The realism that is being advocated here insists on the relevance of a series of converging forces that can only be dealt with effectively by imposing global limits, thereby impinging on the territorial autonomy of sovereign states. In one sense, the reorientation does not entail an abandonment of sovereignty but a robust doctrine of globally responsible sovereignty. What this is meant to suggest is the will and capacity of political actors to favor the human interest in global policy making arenas. Such realism to be acceptable must substantially replace coercive threats and tactics with ones that rely on persuasion and agreement, but also give the power of decision to global procedures and institutions that can operate without the approval of specific states.
Whether to claim the banner of realism is itself an issue to be addressed. On the one side, the relationship between a world of states, of borders, and spatial allocations, is so linked to the realist interpretation of world order that it is necessary to challenge its validity for a 21st century outlook, and put forward a new set of ideas as explanatory and prescriptive. On the other side, such ends may be better achieved by abandoning the rhetoric of state-centric world order altogether, and adopt a new label for what is being proposed. One partial adjustment might be to adopt a terminology of ‘global realism.’

Responding to the Global Crisis

The evidence as to trends and prospects point to the existence of a multidimensional crisis of limits that cannot be resolved by the instruments and worldview associated with state-centric world order. At the same time, there is no basis for supposing that a transition to a more globally centered world order consistent with values associated with democratic pluralism, human rights, and social justice can be embraced as a political project at this time. Rational analysis and argument is no match for entrenched social forces and ingrained political habits. In this respect, without a cultural revolution of global scope there seems to be little basis for believing that the crisis can be overcome in an acceptable manner.

Beyond State-centrism: A Negative Scenario. A few years ago it seemed plausible to envision a partial transformation of state-centric world order by the emergence of the United States as an essentially non-territorial global states, with alliances and military bases spread around the world, with the commons dominated by navies in every ocean and space fully militarized. This global domination project, reinforced by the 9/11 attacks and the neo-conservative ideology that shaped foreign policy during the presidency of George W. Bush, aimed to achieve centralized control over security, including energy resources. This kind of concentration of global policymaking seemed dysutopic as it both overrode rights of self-determination and imposed a kind of neoliberal version of democratic governance throughout the world. In this sense, it would be unlikely that this imperial centering of authority would be sensitive to the challenges posed by the possession of nuclear weapons or the problems associated with global warming, but would on the contrary retain such weaponry and favor economic policies that would promote growth regardless of environmental harm and societal inequities.

This reliance on a globalist approach to problem-solving arising from the role played by a global state seems conceptually to make the situation worse. It also seems empirically to be a fading prospect as the stagnant condition of the world economy combined with the inability of the United States to turn its military superiority into political outcomes in a series of wars weakens its will and capacity to achieve the requisite degree of control.
At the same time, the increased claim to fight its enemies on a globalized battlefield with the use of drone technology and cyberspace tactics underscored the obsolescence of state-centric warfare based on dividing zones of war and peace by reference to borders. In this respect, late modernity retains the state-centric features of the Westphalian Era that prevent a functional and equitable response to global challenges while exhibiting a post-modern approach to warfare that postulates a borderless world. It is also expressed by encouraging flows of money and capital with minimal regulation by states, while restraining unwanted flows of people through the erection of walls, converting rich states into enlarged ‘gated communities,’ and electronically monitoring borders to prevent unlawful entry.

In other words, there are evident strains on the horizontal and legitimating forms of state-centric world order, while the emergence of a new radicalism with respect to vertical and legitimately dubious forms of state-centric geopolitics displays the inability and unwillingness of dominant states to operate within the playbook developed over the centuries by international law. This interface between the statist past and the increasingly globalist future is replete with contradictions and defies a pre-set ordering logic. Such a pattern strongly suggests treating the realities confronting the peoples of the world as taking place during a time of historic transition with respect to world order.

Dangers and Opportunities in a Period of Transition

Horizons of feasibility. [See Gill for fuller depiction of horizons approach] These horizons of feasibility are connected with what appears to be attainable given political constraints. It is the domain of normal politics, and tends to guide politicians confronted with policy options, and is synonymous in addressing global issues with perspectives associated with realism. There is a margin of disagreement among leaders as to what constitutes the outermost horizon of feasibility and the location of this horizon shifts in times of stress, as after wars. On occasion, miscalculations about the constraints produces surprises. For instance, it was supposed that a more robust response to climate change threats could be fashioned under UN auspices than has proved so far to be the case, while the establishment of an International Criminal Court seemed well beyond the reach of normal politics. There are explanations for each exception, especially after the fact. The frequency of unanticipated developments in international political life suggests the weakness of the predictive capacities of social science.

The hypothesis of this article is that horizons of feasibility are trapped within the state-centric paradigm, which as has been contended, lacks the capability to respond to the global crisis in an effective and equitable manner. In effect, its core operating logic based on the interaction of sovereign states is not capable of protecting the human interest in a period of intensifying globalization, not only in relation to the economy, but also with respect to culture and identity.
Horizons of necessity. Even more so than is the case with feasibility, the precise location of horizons of necessity are impossible to pinpoint. Because we are dealing with likely futures, and we lack strong predictive capabilities, future projections are conjectural and likely mistaken either by underestimating or overestimating the magnitude of supposed risks. At the same time, when trends point to what a consensus of scientists identify as dangerous and harmful or when weaponry is relied upon that is capable of inflicting catastrophic damage, prudent action would strongly encourage sharply reducing the risk by all available means. What our experience in the last several decades suggests is that normal politics is not capable of reducing these risks in a manner that conforms to either an understanding of prudence or in response to such values as the avoidance of indiscriminate killing or sensitivity to the rights of future generations.

In effect, horizons of necessity cannot be accommodated by normal politics constrained by horizons of feasibility. This gap between feasibility and necessity suggests the challenges and frustrations that have been so evident in recent decades. Can this gap be closed in acceptable ways? We have dismissed as unacceptable the project of global domination by a single state, which in one sense was a realist response to the global crisis. But there exist other ways to ignore or pretend to close the gap that seem to deepen the crisis rather than overcome it.

Horizons of extremism. As the public is confronted by the gap between feasibility and necessity, it will often become receptive to viewpoints that deny the magnitudes of the alleged risks or offer irrelevant ways of responding. For instance, the rise of religious authority in relation to the environment that advances the position that all that happens on earth is a matter of God's will, and there is no use for humans to try to alter this divine supervision of earthly experience. Or the world will be able to deal with such pressures as the limited reserves of fossil fuels by extracting natural gas and tar sands from deep under the earth's surface through reliance on dangerous technological innovations. The vulnerabilities of such techniques were suggested by the BP Deep Horizon oil rig explosion in 2010 and the Fukushima reactor meltdown in 2011. The pressures to access energies both for maintaining supplies and corporate profits leads to reassurances that future disasters can be avoided by making sure that the technological approach is handled more cautiously. But can we really entrust the human future to such reassurances, whether from religious or corporate sources. It seems extremely foolish to do so, but if we are limited to normal politics it is quite likely that religious and technological extremism will even diminish what can be achieved within horizons of feasibility. It is for this reason that only horizons of desire have any prospect of overcoming the global crisis in ways that are effective and equitable.

Horizons of desire. The gap between feasibility and necessity with respect to the protection and promotion of human interests cannot be closed by normal politics. Beyond this, it is unacceptable to close this gap by way of political
unification under the auspices of a single state claiming to provide global governance for the system of states as a whole. And it seems undesirable at this stage of political evolution, and given the current degree of inequality that exists in the world, to establish a world government by a compact among states; such an outcome might become desirable if it was a result of a bottom up democratizing process throughout all regions of the world and gave maximum expression to principles and goals of subsidiarity. The European Union’s experience serves as a cautionary model, despite the acknowledgement that the main impetus from its founding was top down. The lingering financial crisis in Europe can be interpreted in many ways, including the vulnerability to crisis of international institutions when economic integration is far more advanced than political integration. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that when the economic order shows strains, governments are inclined to act on the basis of national interests even if the damage to other participants is serious and to regional interests may be devastating.

At the same time, enduring the gap increases risks of catastrophic harm in the near future, and neglects the opportunities for enhancing the quality of life for many people throughout the world. One can think of desire by reference to the Millennium Development Goals or the provision of electricity to the 1.5 billion persons now without reliable access. Or it is relevant to posit desire in relation to such policy issues as climate change, nuclear disarmament, and economic stabilization.

What then can be currently discerned on the horizons of desire? There are several hopeful lines of development that can only be set forth in a most superficial way here. Perhaps, most in keeping with the advocacy line being adopted, is the emergence of a global democracy movement that is enlisting grassroots support throughout the world, and was first noticed and appreciated in 2011. Whether it can persist, and grow, remains to be seen, but it does exhibit sensitivity to the human interest, including the establishment of humane forms of global governance. There is a Manifesto for Global Democracy Manifesto that has been endorsed by a growing number of intellectuals and activists from around the world. There are more specific transnational movements in the spheres of environment, human rights, gender equality, and peace that are animated by their attachment to the human interest and their great affinity with likeminded persons regardless of their nationality.

A second promising direction of development is by way of regionalism. If this kind of post-Westphalian world order is to become globally significant it will be important for the EU to solve its problems, including rectifying the mismatch between economic and political integration that currently exists. There are significant moves toward regional cooperation and policymaking in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Whether these advance to the point of transcending national interests without regional interests serving as a mere self-regarding replacement, and no real embodiment of human interests takes place, remains to be seen. The EU has generally acted more responsibly in relation to climate change negotiations than
have most national governments, but there is as yet no evidence of a major substantive shift in political identity resulting from regionalization.

Religion is a great unknown. Each world religion contains universalizing elements that would encourage promotion of the human interest. Also, religions fit within a borderless world rather naturally, especially considering the many diasporas that have intermingled peoples of differing religious and civilizational backgrounds. The existence of religiously and ethnically defined states (Iran, Israel) is inconsistent with the loosening of ties between sovereign states and political identities.

Another significant unknown is connected with the impact of the emerging geopolitical actors constituting a more multi-polar world: China, India, Brazil, Russia, and Turkey, and possibly others. These countries have risen to prominence primarily through their success in trade and investment that raised the per capita living standards of their populations, political stability, and soft power diplomacy. It may be that this softer style of geopolitics, while not attuned directly to the human interest, may provide a more sensitive recognition of the need for limits, which in turn could prompt more readiness to achieve cooperative and longer term adaptation to the various kinds of scarcity that are threatening to intensify conflict and erode sustainability unless addressed from a global perspective.

Conclusion

The framing of world order by reference to a global crisis associated with a troublesome and highly dangerous transition from state-centric borders to globally allocated limits is a fundamental challenge that human society has never before faced on a global scale. Past challenges have led to the collapse and disappearance of particular civilizations, and more recently to the phenomenon of ‘failed states,’ but the reverberations of failure were confined in space, and not threatening to the system itself. These past issues also involved not living successfully in relation to the play of natural forces, some manageable, others not, while the present crisis is mainly a product of anthropocene activities: carbon emissions, population growth, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, resource depletion.

Altering these activities in accordance with the imperatives of horizons of desire, or to meet the requirements of horizons of necessity, cannot be achieved by normal politics. In this central respect the future of humanity depends on the emergence of a populist form of global democracy that manages to encapsulate an ecumenical spirituality, which from the vantage point of the present seems to be counting on a politics of impossibility. But the impossibility happens, black swans make their presence felt in countless ways. Recent historical ruptures were not within the active political imagination of those who were credentialed experts on world politics: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union; the mostly peaceful transformation of racist South Africa into a multiracial constitutional democracy; the pro-democracy Arab uprisings of 2011; the Occupy
Movement. In this respect, closing the gap between feasibility and necessity seems impossible, but as is contended here, this does not mean it will not happen.

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i See Jacques Derrida, “Avowing the Impossible: ‘Returns,’ Repentance, and Reconciliation,”


iii Plato’s *Republic*; philosophical anarchism carries on the traditions of localized governance based on natural human communities.


xii For alarmist assessments by informed authors see James Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren: The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our

xiii For a prominent example of such a normative inquiry drawing on religious, cultural, and ethical sources of guidance see Hans Kung, Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic (New York: Continuum, 1993).

xiv For depiction and documentation see Jared Diamond, Survival: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (New York: Viking, 2005).

xv See Roger Pielke, Jr., The Climate Fix: What scientists and politicians won’t tell you about global warming (New York: Basic Books, 2010), esp. 191-216; see also the more polemical essay by the climate skeptic Bjorn Lomborg, “Environmental Alarmism, Then and Now,” Foreign Affairs 91 (No. 4): 24-40; for devastating critique of Lomborg’s deceptive methodology to dismiss climate change concerns see Howard Friel, The Lomborg Deception: Setting the Record Straight About Global Warming (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).


xix For a suggestive depiction of an emerging alternative paradigm see Richard Tarnas, Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View (New York: Viking, 2006).

xx See reasoning of the International Court of Justice that left a tiny opening for reliance on such weaponry, and compare it with the rationale of the defense that sought to preclude all claims under all conditions. The Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion, ICJ Reports, 1996.


xxiv Some non-conservative liberals have promoted such a conception, e.g. Michael Mandelbaum, Case for Goliath: How America acts as the world’s
government in the twenty-first century (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), not as a response to the global crisis but as a disseminator of positive values and sensible leadership positions.


For exposition see G. John Ikenberry, After Victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)


See important study highlighting the potential positive world order contributions of regionalism by Terrence E. Paupp, The Future of Global Relations: Crumbling Walls, Rising Regions (New York: Palgrave, 2009)


Although see Tarnas, Note 16, for an approach that restates such a quest for humane governance on the basis of a radically different set of cultural possibilities, which imply a plausible convergence in the near future of horizons of feasibility and horizons of desire.