

Kevin P. Clements

Global Security confronting challenges to universal peace

The challenge of peace is complex and intractable. Much depends on the meaning of the concept and the definition of the term. And in that respect much depends on whether a diplomatic-legal or a sociopolitical approach is adopted.

The diplomatic-legal approach is enshrined in the United Nations Charter of 1945. The primary goal of the United Nations is to protect future generations from the scourge of war. The charter bestows on the Security Council the primary responsibility for maintaining, or restoring, international peace and security. The means by which this is to be attained rests, by convention, on the doctrine of

collective security. Article 39 empowers the council to determine whether there has been an act of aggression or a breach of the peace, and in such cases the council may authorise the use of armed force, by one member state or collectively by a group, to restore international peace and security.

The same article also empowers the council to determine whether a 'threat

to international peace and security' has arisen, and respond according to its best judgement. It is this concept, a 'threat to peace', that has provided the means for considerable self-empowerment by the council over the past quarter century.

The concept of global security has become an established term to use in the 21st century. In one sense it is an update on the mid-20th century concept of 'international security', because it acknowledges that, while military capacity remains essentially with the nation state, the sources of conflict and the key to peace and security in the contemporary age draw from insights pertinent to the emerging global community. Yet this insight was, in fact, also enshrined in the UN Charter in a concept that is scarcely recognised. Article 1.2 requires member states to take 'appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace'. The concept of universal peace is entirely different from that of 'international peace and security' in chapter 7. Universal peace does not encompass military force; it evokes work of a sociopolitical nature.

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So, what might be the challenges to strengthening universal peace? In today's world they are numerous. And they seem to be increasing. In this article I intend to address the contemporary sociopolitical challenges to the attainment of universal peace for humankind.

Measuring peace

Every year the Global Peace Index ranks the world's nations in terms of their levels of peacefulness (see Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016). The top five most peaceful countries in 2016 were Iceland, Denmark, Austria, New Zealand and Portugal. We do not cook the books (I chair the international advisory board), but New Zealand has ranked second or fourth for the last ten years. The five least peaceful countries are Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Over the course of the past five years there has been a movement away from the previous quinquennial (2005–10), when it looked as though the numbers of violent conflicts around the world were diminishing. Since then there has been a steady expansion of armed conflict from 2008 (19,601 battle deaths) to 2015 (101,406 battle deaths). These figures, moreover, underestimate the numbers of deaths and displacements occurring in the world right now, yet they indicate that increasing numbers of people are being killed in war. The other consequence of this is that there are now 49 million internally displaced people and refugees as a consequence of war, an enormous increase compared to the early 2000s (15–18 million).

So, despite claims that things are getting better (Pinker, 2011), there is evidence that violent ideologies and violent behaviour (both organised and spontaneous) are actually getting worse. It is difficult to recall a moment in history when there have been so many negative dynamics intersecting. There seem to be some fundamentally pathological things happening at a political level that are beginning to pose a major challenge to the emerging global community.

Because of this the world is at a critical juncture, as political leaders seek to make sense of some challenging global dynamics from the national level

alone. Most of these big issues (climate change, war, refugees and inequality) cannot be resolved nationally. They are global challenges which require global solutions. The main problem in our response to these global challenges is that nation states are defining threats to their security and well-being more narrowly.

Since 9/11, for example, Western powers have focused on terrorist threat and harnessed huge financial resources to prevent, manage and defeat it. This expenditure has, by and large, been misplaced. Terrorism-related deaths, for example, increased by 286% between 2008 and 2014. But in a broader context the total number of deaths is infinitesimal.

overseas development assistance for the whole world in 2015 was 22% of the cost of conflict (i.e. US\$167 billion). The peacekeeping budgets globally were US\$8.27 billion and the total amount spent on UN peace building was US\$6.8 billion – a tiny fraction compared to the amount spent on violence.

So this is the extraordinary reality we are grappling with. There is something deeply malign about the way we are organising and distributing global wealth. When so many parts of the world are in dire need of basic necessities it is shocking that so much wealth is directed towards the prevention/management of organised or spontaneous violence. In the

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The Global Terrorism Index, for example, noted that deaths from terrorist incidents were 32,715 in 2015 compared to 8,466 in 2008 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). This pales into relative insignificance when compared to the 1.25 million people worldwide who were killed in traffic accidents, or the 33,366 people killed in the United States from gun deaths in 2013. Most of the world's terrorist fatalities (79%) are accounted for by five nations: Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Libya and Pakistan. Even with the addition of fatalities from terrorist incidents in France and Belgium in 2015, Western societies need not really worry about the 'terrorist threat'; it is a problem for countries already deeply embroiled in violent conflict.

Let us turn to the economic cost of conflict. The Institute for Economics and Peace has been calculating the actual cost of direct conflict, assaults and violence on the streets and the costs of trying to insure against such contingencies. It estimates the economic costs of conflict in 2015 to be US\$742 billion. Total

Asia Pacific region, for example, military expenditure is on a rapid increase while many of the other indicators of national, regional and global well-being are moving in the opposite direction. The correlates of peace – well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, free flow of information, good relations with neighbours, high levels of human capital, low levels of corruption – are all moving in a negative direction. Instead of governments enhancing their capacity, effectiveness and legitimacy there is growing evidence globally that they are becoming more incapable of sound governance, and generating high levels of political alienation and scepticism.

Many governments are also proving to be constitutionally incapable of redistributing wealth to ensure that the marginalised and the excluded from elite democratic politics have sufficient to ensure the basic necessities of life. One of the biggest challenges to peace globally is the inequitable distribution of resources. Oxfam's latest inequality report (January 2016) finds that 1% of the world's

population owns 48% of the world's wealth, and by 2020 this is expected to reach 51%. This scale of inequality is completely unsustainable at global and national levels over the short, medium and long term.

One of the consequences of this global inequality is a generalised and widespread rejection of globalisation. We can talk all we like about global citizenship and building a global civic culture, but the reality is that many of our compatriots in Western countries are moving away from globalisation (both negative and positive) and reverting to atavistic nationalism. As real wages for most people in advanced industrialised countries remain static

on emotional and charismatic appeal. All of them have activated what we might call latent authoritarian tendencies, or more importantly a fundamental quest for order by any means, but particularly by active authoritarian leadership. This is posing fundamental challenges to the whole notion of global citizenship and global institutions capable of managing the global economy in a sustainable and equitable manner. This regression towards nationalism is accompanied by a growing tolerance for coercive and violent solutions to problems even when these have proven ineffective.

Jonathan Sacks suggests that we are outsourcing not just our economies and

a failure to make sacrifices in the present for the sake of the future, a loss of faith in old beliefs and no new vision to take their place. These are the danger signals and they are flashing now. (Sacks, 2016)

These danger signals are flashing in ways inimical to the whole idea of a global civic culture and effective global institutions. Global political and economic dynamics are generating a series of challenging pathologies.

These dynamics are producing deep political pathology. I am completing a book on the politics of compassion which identifies a number of political pathologies inimical to peace, justice and sustainable development. They can be summarised as the politics of domination, inequality and greed, fear and interventionism, the politics of deficient leadership and the politics of a paralysing present. This is what humanity is confronting today as it contemplates how to build a global civic culture and create global citizens out of national citizens. The 'retribalisation of culture' that seems to be in the ascendancy is deeply subversive of global order. It is more subversive than the 'terrorist threat' or the fear of foreign invasion.

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or negative, and when large numbers of people understand, through social media, the hugely inequitable distribution of wealth, why should they commit to high levels of either regional integration or global integration?

The most fundamental challenge to global peace lies in the global retreat from tolerant cosmopolitanism to intolerant atavistic nationalism, growing racial prejudice, anti-immigrant and refugee sentiment, Euroscepticism, homophobia and Islamophobia. These are the correlates of radical global movements and they are closely correlated with racism, sexism, Islamophobia and intolerance.

Elections have been won recently by transgressing most norms of civilised political discourse and by emotional rather than rational appeals, and by dwelling in what is now known as the world of post-truth politics. 'Post-truth' political systems place a low value on integrity and truthfulness and high value

politics but morality. There is a sense in which individual conscience is taking third place to the imperatives of the market and the polity. Economic crises and failures, for example, are being addressed by different political systems but most are proving to be woefully inadequate in ensuring that responses to such failure do not bear heavily on those who already lack capacity and political efficacy. Upon receiving the 2016 Templeton Prize, Sacks had this to say:

Civilizations begin to die when they lose the moral passion that brought them into being in the first place. It happened to Greece and Rome, and it can happen to the West. The sure signs are these: a falling birthrate, moral decay, growing inequalities, a loss of trust in social institutions, self-indulgence on the part of the rich, hopelessness on the part of the poor, unintegrated minorities,

Conclusion

Political leaders interested in the protection of cosmopolitan space and the advancement of positive transnationalism and globalism will need to generate a paradigm shift away from 'power over' to 'power with', from coercive to integrative power. We have to develop normative systems capable of sustaining relatively non-coercive, non-dominant social systems and the politics that go with this. This is a fundamental problem. The 21st century can no longer sustain notions of hierarchical power, with some people giving the orders and the rest following. It does not work in terms of the integrated challenges we are facing in the world at the moment. So how do we develop a whole new concept of politics which is based on integration and shared leadership and shared accountability, with some moral vision and passion to go with it?

Rogers argues that there are two big dynamics that have to be grappled with (Rogers, 2016). The first is the increasing marginalisation of the majority of the world's people caused by the workings of the contemporary international economic system, which concentrates most of the fruits of economic growth in the hands of a trans-global elite of some 1.5 billion people. The second is climate change. Both of these global problems demand global solutions. So this is the moment to transcend national sovereignties with effective, capable and legitimate global institutions. But it is a moment we are rapidly losing as we retreat from some of the achievements of the past back to narrow concepts of nationalism. So how do we reactivate the notion of an inclusive cosmopolitan global civic culture?

Even these words will confront those whose wages haven't lifted for the last five years or those who are living in the rust belt or those who have just been displaced from their farms. Why should they listen? There are some fundamental challenges here which we really have to grapple with. They are at the heart of

building a peaceful world; at the heart of doing justice at the level of nationality.

How do we mobilise people across national boundaries with a new vision of an interdependent, just and harmonious world, and how do we ensure that this vision will appeal to those who are in the business of reactivating atavistic tribalism?

Lévinas asserts that we ensure our security by unconditional responsibility to and for the welfare of the other, except when the other is causing suffering, in which case we have a primary responsibility to stop the suffering. Sacks said something similar in his Templeton Lecture:

This means recovering the moral dimension that links our welfare to the welfare of others, making us collectively responsible for the common good. It means recovering the spiritual dimension, or at least an ethical dimension, that helps us tell the difference between the value of things and their price. We are more than consumers and voters;

our dignity transcends what we earn and own. It means remembering that what's important is not just satisfying our desires but also knowing which desires to satisfy. It means restraining ourselves in the present so that our children may have a viable future. It means reclaiming collective memory and identity so that society becomes less of a hotel and more of a home. In short, it means learning that there are some things we cannot or should not outsource, some responsibilities we cannot or should not delegate away. (Sacks, 2016)

The whole point about developing global citizenship, building a global civil culture and revitalising the global project relies on each one of us rediscovering our own moral capacities, some sense of what it is that we value and cherish, and then doing our best to resist the forces that are aimed at dismantling all that has been achieved with progressive enlightenment projects over the past century.

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Double Book Launch

by Professor Jonathan Boston,
School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington

Governing for the Future: Designing Democratic Institutions for a Better Tomorrow
(Emerald Books, 2016)

Safeguarding the Future: Governing in an Uncertain World
(Bridget Williams Books, 2017)

Date: 23 March 2017
Time: 5.40pm – 7.00pm
Venue: Banquet Hall
Parliamentary Building
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