

## Introduction

Everybody knows that the world has become a “global village”, in the famous phrase of Marshall McLuhan. We all have to live together and work together on one small planet Earth, which seems to grow smaller and more fragile with every passing year. What we need now is a properly constituted ‘village council’, to deal with the global problems that confront all of us in common, and to move us towards a safer and more prosperous future. That is the argument for world federation in a nutshell, and the basic premise of this book. The present United Nations is clearly inadequate for the task.

The book begins with an outline of some of the reasons why we need such a village council. First is the problem of nuclear weapons. In order to abolish them, we must be able to guarantee the security of each nation without them. We need to construct a universal system of common security based upon international law, which can settle international disputes without recourse to weapons:- or again, a world federation. William Penn recognized the principle in 1692: *“Peace is maintained by Justice, which is a Fruit of Government as Government is from Society, and Society from Consent”*. The greenhouse effect and other massive environmental problems also require a global approach. A world federation would help to promote free trade and economic development around the world. It would act to combat starvation, poverty and disease in Third World regions. It would co-ordinate global programs of research and development in areas of science and technology such as space exploration and astronomy, particle physics, and the human genome. As H.G. Wells once foretold, it would open a whole new era of hope and progress for humanity.

The next three chapters provide some background material, which is important for a thorough understanding of the topic. Chapter 2 consists of some brief historical excerpts. The concept of world citizenship or the global village goes back at least to Ancient Greece: *“I am not an Athenian, or a Greek, but a citizen of the world”*, said Socrates. Schemes for European or world federation are traced from Pierre Dubois in 1306 through the Duc de Sully, William Penn, the Abbé de St. Pierre, Rousseau, Kant and others. The growth of international organizations from Waterloo up to the League of Nations is briefly described. We recall the astonishing rise of the world federalist movement after World War II, driven by the fear of atomic weapons; and its equally sudden collapse in the anti-Communist hysteria of the Korean War. The nuclear arms race that followed, and the long siege of the Cold War which ended so suddenly after the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, are summarized. Chapter 2 closes with a brief account of some specific proposals for world federation since the Second World War.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the world security organization we have at present, in the United Nations. Its foundation at the end of World War II is recalled, and its structure is outlined very briefly: in essence it is an alliance of the Great Powers to keep the peace, following the pattern of the Concert of Europe and the League of Nations. The UN can pride itself on some remarkable achievements over the years, but it is basically far too weak to be effective. Its shortcomings are analyzed, and a brief description is given of the many attempts to reform it. So far, no significant constitutional reform has ever been achieved.

We turn in chapter 4 to the remarkable example provided by the European Union. Whereas the movement for world federation has failed up till now, the European federalists

have had remarkable success in their efforts. The initiatives of Jean Monnet, Paul-Henri Spaak and others are described, which led successively to the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community, the Common Market, and finally the European Union. The integration of Europe still has a long way to go, but already some sort of federation has emerged, making another war between the nations of Western Europe virtually inconceivable. Some important lessons can be extracted from the European experience.

Many people have given detailed structural blueprints of a possible world federation; but such details can really be settled only by the delegates who are eventually gathered at the founding convention. A more useful exercise, it seems to me, is to try and formulate some broad general principles which could form the basis for such a federation. For the most part, these have already been recognized and adopted by the European Union, and to a lesser extent by the United Nations. Democracy and the rule of law would be automatic selections as guiding principles along with a basic conception of human rights; and the evolution of the European Union has thrown up some further important ideas such as ‘subsidiarity’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘flexibility’, which should also be widely acceptable. Taken together, these principles give an overall guide to the division of rights and responsibilities between the federation, the member states, and the individual citizens. The rights and freedoms of the citizen would be protected by the principles of democracy and human rights, while the domestic sovereignty of the member nations would be protected by the principle of subsidiarity.

A vital objective of world federation, almost by definition, would be the achievement of ‘universality’: that is, the federation should include all of the nations upon earth. At the present time, however, the principles of democracy and universality are not mutually compatible, for the simple reason that not all the nations upon earth are democratic. This is a dilemma that has long bedevilled the world federalist movement. Some arguments are given why any prospective world federation should be restricted, in the first instance, to democratic states alone. While universality may be taken as the ultimate aim, it should not be taken as a *sine qua non* right from the outset.

Chapter 6 examines some of the classic problems and objections faced by proponents of world federalism. These include the reluctance of nation-states to surrender their sovereignty, and the lack of common values between different nations. There is the problem of how international law is to be enforced; and the fear that diverse national cultures will be submerged and lost. Finally, there is the widespread fear (which we shall argue has little rational justification) that a world government would lead to world tyranny. These are the great obstacles to world federation, which have hitherto proved insuperable. Some momentous political changes have occurred over recent years, however, which allow a whole new perspective on the issue. The Soviet Union has collapsed and the Cold War has ended, thus removing the deep divide between East and West which was the single largest barrier to world federation. Another vital development has been the creation of the European Union, which demonstrates that integration between sovereign nations is possible.

The last chapter discusses the question of how a world federation can be established, assuming that we agree it is a good idea. This is called the ‘transition’ problem. Various options are discussed, such as reform of the United Nations, expansion of the European Union, or the growth of other regional organizations. It seems inevitable that the process will have to be a gradual and evolutionary one, following the European example. The crucial question then is, how do we make a start? One possible avenue could be the formation of a World Peace-Keeping Association, complementary to the United Nations, made up of the democratic nations of the world. The Association could maintain a standing peace-keeping force to carry out the peace-keeping obligations of its members under the aegis of the UN, and to preserve their individual security; and it should also include a democratic Assembly representative of the member states. It would thus repair two of the most glaring deficiencies

of the present United Nations; and it would form a natural basis for wider and deeper integration in the future. A reformed NATO organization could fulfil this role. These possibilities are explored in some detail.

Whether by this avenue or another, there is no reason why the first small steps towards world federation could not be taken quite soon. The dawning of a new millennium would provide the perfect symbolic opportunity: it depends on the vision and foresight of the world's statesmen whether that opportunity is taken or not. In the long run, at any rate, I believe that the formation of some sort of global federation is virtually inevitable.