

Why Global Governance Reeks of False Utopia

Strobe Talbott is an important figure in the Washington establishment. Currently president of the influential Brookings Institution, he was deputy secretary of state in the Clinton administration. He has long been an unabashed advocate of global governance. In a highly revealing passage in his 2008 book, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation*, Talbott wrote:

“I remember being perplexed in Sunday school over why God was so angry about Babel. Unlike Adam and Eve, the builders of the Tower were not directly violating one of God’s injunctions ... nor were the denizens of Babel guilty of the depravity that provoked the flood or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Rather, the city fathers had simply gone on a building spree that was motivated by an impulse to keep all humanity together in a single political, linguistic and cultural entity. What, exactly, was wrong with that?”

Indeed, since the story of the Tower of Babel, some thinkers have envisioned a single global political authority that would bring peace and harmony to the world. In the Middle Ages, Dante’s *De Monarchia* advocated a world empire headed by the Holy Roman Emperor because he believed that a single global authority was the only way to achieve universal peace and justice. During the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant argued for a world federation of republics that should “form a united power and the law-based decisions of a united will” to create and maintain “perpetual peace.”

In the 19th century, Victor Hugo supported global rule, as did Alfred Lord Tennyson in his famous 1837 poem “Locksley Hall.”

In the 20th century, a range of leading intellectuals advocated world government or a worldwide federal system. They included H.G. Wells, Arnold Toynbee, Bertrand Russell, Robert Maynard Hutchins, William O. Douglas, Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins and Albert Einstein, among others.

Indeed, Einstein wrote in 1946: "A world government must be created which is able to solve conflicts between nations by judicial decision. This government must be based on a clear cut constitution which is approved by the governments and the nations and which gives it the sole disposition of offensive 'weapons.' "

Four decades later, the former CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite, once touted as "the most trusted man in America," argued that national sovereignty needed to be limited for the sake of peace in the world: "It seems to many of us that if we are to avoid the eventual catastrophic world conflict we must strengthen the United Nations as a first step toward a world government."

Today, however, almost no serious analyst speaks of world government or world federalism. During the past few decades, the more sophisticated champions of a worldwide political authority have shifted their goal to a more limited idea of "global governance." It is a "less threatening concept," remarked former Obama official, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was director of policy and planning at the U.S. State Department under Hillary Clinton from 2009 to 2011.

In explaining global governance, Slaughter argues that nation-states should cede sovereign authority to supranational institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Slaughter maintains that such transnational networks "can perform many of the functions of a world government—legislation, administration and adjudication—without the form," thereby creating an effective global rule of law.

The main arguments for global authority—whether as a world government or some other form of global governance—have remained strikingly similar for thousands of years. To wit, world peace and global justice are universal aspirations of human beings, and they can be achieved only through a global political authority.

Today forces promoting global governance represent a significant actor on the stage of world politics. This “global governance coalition” encompasses both an ideological core (what I call “transnational progressives”) and a social base (transnational pragmatists).

Generally speaking, the global governance movement includes the leadership of the European Union, the top echelons of the United Nations, deans of major American law schools, prominent international lawyers and academic experts in international relations, major American Foundations (for example, Ford, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Mott and Open Society), leading human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, officials at international institutions like the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund, and executives from major global corporations.

An Early Argument

The globalist argument today, as in previous centuries, presumes certain assumptions about the nature of man. It assumes that there is no such thing as a more or less stable human nature. It assumes that humans are not flawed, but are infinitely malleable.

Globalism is fundamentally utopian, hubristic and dictatorial in its belief that some type of man-made global political authority, which would inevitably erode self-government, could alter human behavior to the extent that it ends or greatly lessens war, poverty, inequality and injustice. In other words, the globalists are saying that man, on his own, without

God, is capable of creating something approximating a "heaven on earth" or a man-made second coming. Thus, globalism often becomes a substitute or ersatz secular religion.

The globalists are opposed by advocates of republican or democratic self-government in both the secular political realm and in the realm of theology with complimentary arguments about human nature, ordered liberty and the right of a people to rule themselves. The American Founding Fathers believed in republican self-government and opposed utopian schemes fostering globalism. They centered their political philosophy on a realistic conception of human nature.

Whereas the globalists contend that the very concept of "human nature" is problematic, the Founding Fathers' understanding of humanity conceived of a timeless human nature as a mix of positive and negative characteristics. Therefore, any republican experiment in self-government—if it was to be successful—would have to be based on a realistic view of human nature.

The Founding Fathers understood that political institutions and devices alone (separation of powers, federalism, checks and balances) would never be enough to sustain republican self-government. They knew that it was vital to cultivate those qualities in human nature that would strengthen the American way of life. In several official documents, the Founding Fathers declared the necessity of promoting religion and morality. Thus George Washington in his Farewell Address of 1796 said that the cultivation of religion and morality was necessary to sustain popular government.

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports," Washington said. "And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion."

The Founding Fathers repeatedly referred to “religion, morality and education” as necessary to sustain free government.

In contrast with Immanuel Kant’s argument that “a republic consisting of a population of devils” could survive if properly organized, John Adams once stated: “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”

A Zero-Sum Conflict

The clash between global governance and democratic self-government is a moral struggle concerning the first principles of government and politics.

The difference between these two visions of political life is irreconcilable. Who governs? Who determines the laws under which we shall live? Will American citizens live under the laws of the United States, or under “evolving norms of customary international law?” These are the issues at stake when some State Department official or international lawyer talks abstractly about “redefining sovereignty” or a “new architecture of global governance.”

In the future, will this sovereignty remain in the hands of the American people, or will it be “shared” with international judges who are not part of our representative democracy?

The Moral Right to Self-Government

The fundamental question beneath the struggle between national self-government and global governance is whether or not Americans, and other peoples, have the moral right to rule themselves. More than 200 years ago, the Founding Fathers had their own answer to this question. Their answer is expressed in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution of the United States. Americans declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776 to establish their right to rule

themselves. They believed the British were taking away the degree of self-rule they enjoyed in their colonial governments.

The actions by the British Crown that the American colonists protested are exactly what the advocates of global governance are attempting today: to subject Americans to a jurisdiction foreign to our laws.

A Single Global Authority Means Tyranny

Certainly, peoples and governments are subject to corruption, as biblical prophets and secular philosophers have discussed for thousands of years.

No doubt, Americans have ignored the wisdom of Washington's emphasis on religion and morality in his masterful farewell address. Nevertheless, consider how the situation could be even worse if there was a single global authority. What would happen if a global regime became a form of tyranny, even of the "soft" variety, ruled by bureaucrats, as feared by Alexis de Tocqueville?

Political philosophers have long pondered this problem. Immanuel Kant worried that a single world republic could eventually become a "soulless despotism." Thus, he favored a federation of nations with supranational powers rather than a single world republic.

In a famous intellectual exchange, two giants of political philosophy, Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève, discussed a hypothetical world government in relation to wisdom and philosophy. Kojève saw the emergence of a "universal and homogeneous state" as the fulfillment of history and progress. Strauss asserted that "the coming of the universal and homogeneous state will be the end of philosophy" under a reign of tyranny.

Strauss maintained that "the Chief of the universal and

homogeneous state, or Universal and Final Tyrant, will be an unwise man. ... To retain his power, he will be forced to suppress every activity which might lead people into doubt of the essential soundness of the universal and homogeneous state: He must suppress philosophy as an attempt to corrupt the young." If a single world tyranny came into place, Strauss noted, the philosopher (and, one might add, the political refugee) would have nowhere to go. As long as there was no universal state, "the philosophers could escape to other countries if life became unbearable in the tyrant's dominions. From the Universal Tyrant, however, there is no escape."

Leo Strauss, Immanuel Kant and others argued from the point of view of secular philosophy that a man-made global authority could lead to tyranny. But essentially the same point is made in Genesis. Leo Strauss' "Universal and Final Tyrant" sounds very much like Nimrod, the ruler associated with the building of the Tower of Babel. Nimrod was, after all, a tyrant and rebel against God.

As a globalist, the young Strobe Talbott had good reason to be upset with his Sunday school's lesson on the Tower of Babel. His teacher, however, was right. The proto-globalists building the tower were attempting to create a false utopia, a potentially tyrannical and ultimately unattainable, man-made "heaven on earth."

John Fonte, Ph.D., *is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. His book* Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others? *won the Intercollegiate Studies Institute's (ISI) book award for 2012. Parts of this article are taken from the book.*

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More information

In his book *Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?* (Encounter Books), author Dr. John Fonte sheds light on the growing global governance movement and how dangerous it can truly be to America's republic. You can find this book wherever books are sold or at

.