An essay on fostering a global culture of unity, peace, and justice

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The organizing principle of social progress is the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and emotional growth of every individual human being. One of the imperatives of development is the existence of a harmonious and coherent social environment based on the concept of the oneness of humankind. According to this principle, every human being is an individual part of an organic whole called the human race. The component parts of such an organic unit are interrelated and interdependent, and a healthy function of it requires cooperation among and coexistence of all its members. It provides an appropriate social environment for the full actualization of the potentialities inherent in every individual unit of the whole.

The relationship between the whole and its parts reflects the true meaning of oneness. True oneness lies in the unity of diverse peoples, races, and nations. It is not intended to create uniformity. The exclusion of uniformity and the implication of unity in diversity gives a historical dynamism to human society's evolutionary process to increase complexity and integration.

The concept of the oneness of humankind is built upon the perspective that humanity, as a system of interacting physical, biological, social, and spiritual subsystems, is involved in the process of evolutionary development. Although this process is fluctuant, in the long run, it continuously transforms the world into a higher level of integration and unity. Humanity – as part of this general theory of development – throughout history, has achieved different levels of unity and now is approaching the culmination of its social development: the inevitable need for unity at the global level.

The following theoretical assumptions regarding the component parts of this evolutionary system can explain the nature and the characteristics of the problems humanity faces today:

1. The inevitable tendency in the nature of the problems to find a general structure and affect humanity's entire fabric as a global entity (chain reaction).

2. It asks for a unifying agency, global structure, and universal value system to address all these problems' central theme: the disunity of humankind.

3. The universal concept of reciprocal interdependence of the global system constitutes the criteria by which problems can be analyzed, and their solutions can be evaluated and determined.

4. Global problems are viewed as inevitable social changes when the old system is disintegrating, and a new system is emerging.

5. The human race, collectively, in a vast historical process, has passed through different stages of growth and development analogous to an individual and now is at the period of its turbulent adolescence. Thus, prejudices and wars have been the expression of immature stages of the human race's developmental process as a distinct, organic unit. The emergence of a global system is the outcome of historical processes within which fragmentation and integration compete to form a higher level of maturity and transformation in world order.

The past century's events demonstrate how humanity has undertaken steps to reverse the catastrophic consequences of the two world wars and give birth to a new global structure. These are among some of the favorable signs and constructive forces which ultimately give birth to a global social structure:

1. Scientific and technological advancements have made the physical unity of the world and the administration of human affairs on a global scale possible

2. The creation and evolution of two international organizations: The League of Nations, which was succeeded by the United Nations Organization

3. The completion of the process of nation-building as many nations achieved their independence after the Second World War

4. The establishment of different social, political, cultural, and economic organizations among different groups of nations indicating mutual interest and the necessity of cooperation among themselves

5. Increasing universal endeavors and humanitarian efforts to protect and defend human rights all around the globe without the consideration of national, racial, political, or religious barriers

6. The grassroots movement, such as youth and women movements, calling for an end to the war

7. The conceptual shift in different social/economic ideologies toward a universal framework and commonly shared requirements of the world order and the recognition of humanity as one indivisible unit facing problems shared by all

8. The emerging consciousness toward viewing the unity of the world as both a normative disposition and a factual reality, supported and validated by both scientific and cultural/ faith traditions

The establishment of unity in the global system is a complex, multi-dimensional, and all-encompassing goal. It needs normative and factual prerequisites to support humanity's oneness and eliminate the factors contributing to disunity. The concept of the oneness of humankind, in its broadest sense, provides a theoretical framework for the reorganization and administration of the global system as one country, the home of humankind.

While the necessity and the possibility of world unity are increasingly acknowledged, we need to effectively address some of the challenges that threaten the world today and provide appropriate learning environments to cultivate new knowledge and values congruent with the exigencies of an interdependent world. Global endeavors are needed to respond to the global system's emerging social, cultural, and sociopolitical trends. Among these efforts, the role of education is of critical importance. Education as an instrument for the collective transformation can contribute to the development of new thoughts and values, which will lead to conscious and deliberate acts for social change and the elimination of the norms and attitudes advocating prejudice, disunity, alienation, and domination.

The following are some of the immediate imperatives to a peaceful transition to a just global order:

1. **<u>Elimination of discrimination, persecution, and violence based on race, ethnicity, religion, and political persuasion</u>**

Racism, religious persecution, and political oppression are major barriers to peace, a significant challenge to reconciliation, understanding, and peaceful transition to global coexistence. History has shown that prejudices of all kinds are incompatible with the cardinal principle of the oneness of humanity. The elimination of prejudices, a necessary prerequisite for establishing a just world order, depends primarily on the consciousness of oneness and the recognition of human solidarity. Prejudices are deeply rooted in society's social fabric and proven to be lethal to peace and coexistence. They characterize moral decline and are profoundly intertwined with the destructive forces threatening the interests of the generality of humankind.

2. **<u>Economic justice</u>**

As we discussed before, human progress requires a favorable social milieu that would allow individual potentialities to be actualized. Today, the complexity and broad scope of human transactions need economic justice to be a principal part of a peaceful, flourishing global system. We are now facing an option to choose between poverty and the prospects of narrowing the gap between rich and poor. While the former will undoubtedly lead to war and conflict, the latter can facilitate world peace and unity.

A culture of sustainable life should prevail in order to bring about change to economic stability. Rules and regulations are necessary; ultimately, people's thinking and value priorities need to be refined and modified. We need a culture of moderation and consideration so that higher-income people always think about low- or no-income people. Moreover, this culture should replace a consumer culture that relies on unnecessary expenditure such as excessive leisure, fancy cars, or expensive houses, which bring instant joy to some individuals but waste the recourses that could have been used for the general welfare of the society and uplift the standard of living for the poor so that they can also have a dignified life, and access to jobs, shelter, education, clean water, and health services.

Obviously, moderation cannot be superimposed on people. Instead, it must be promoted by a change of culture and those in the position of power to become role models for the rest. If the

gap between the rich and the poor in society is reduced, corruption is controlled, and moderation is observed, we will have a better wealth distribution. The natural resources and food on our planet are enough for everybody if these resources are distributed appropriately. Distribution of wealth has always been a problem; according to a report published on January 16, 2017, by Oxfam International, the world's eight wealthiest individuals own the same amount of wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest part of the globe. This report shows that the gap between rich and poor is far more significant than had been suspected. It delineates how the widening disparity fuels the inequality crisis; this unjust distribution of wealth leads to corruption, unemployment, crimes, political instability, and wars. Consequently, any small incident causes significant problems in the world.

There are sufficient facts and experiences containing principles and premises to establish a global economic system based on the laws of cooperation and interdependence, to abolish the extremes of poverty and wealth, to eliminate hunger and human misery, to provide material necessities for the fulfillment of basic human needs (food, shelter, health, and education) for all the members of society, to eliminate all trade barriers and safeguard the organic development of all nations, to resolve the conflict between labor and capital, and to exalt work and individual responsibility.

We need to advance economic discourse for its central challenge of emerging from <u>economic nationalism to a world commonwealth</u> in which economic welfare and other overriding principles for global reform are viewed mutually interdependent, and the economic, political, and ethical life of humanity is regarded as an integrated system. For example, while economic justice is a necessary precondition for world peace, on the other hand, the establishment of lasting peace can have major impacts on the economic well-being of humanity.

3. <u>Servant leadership</u>

The leaders of the world have to realize what is happening to the people of the world; the pressure is building up due to corruption, unemployment, injustice in all aspects of life, poverty, absence of proper health care system, shortage of clean water, and all kinds of prejudice. As an Arab

proverb says, heavy rain begins with a drop before it pours. Likewise, leaders need to look seriously into their countries' political, social, and economic state and start addressing them before the chaos engulfing the world. Leaders of the world are so involved with their election and re-election or the affairs of their political parties that they have no time to look deep into the roots of the unrest and problems deranging countries of the world. In the present political and economic systems, people are serving to satisfy the government. We should reverse the arrangements to have the government serve the people. The words of climate activist Greta Thunberg addressed the U.N.'s Climate Action Summit in New York City in September 2019 was a litmus test for how world leaders respond to the growing restlessness of young people with the status quo: "The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now, is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.[1]

Servant leadership needs to be involved in politics and mobilize political forces to advance social policies. However, due to its universal humanitarian orientation remains non-partisan and seeks the support of politicians and organizations affiliated with diverse or even contending political parties. In this time and age of partisan leadership, authentic leadership needs to transcend political differences and stand beyond petty and parochial politics.

After COVID-19, humanity realizes that to face future challenges in the world, we need collective action. Those in the position of authority and decision making must recognize this fundamental imperative of our time. Leaders must try to cooperate rather than compete and accept that human beings and their dignity must be the ultimate goal and the center of all their policies and decisions. They need to realistically think about a world without war, hostility, and violence. COVID-19 accentuated this realization; an unwelcome tiny virus made humanity, strong or weak, poor or rich, intensely aware of its vulnerability. Suppose the shock has not yet been enough to bring awareness to leaders to change the course we are still going to go through

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[1] U.N.'s Climate Action Summit in New York City, September 23/2019

even much more problems such as significant wars. In that case, even atomic power could not be excluded, or the emergence of viruses even stronger than COVID-19.

4. <u>World citizenship</u>

The human species' evolutionary history indicates that the human race, collectively, in a vast historical process, has achieved different levels of unity and complexity – from the birth of family to tribal solidarity, leading to the constitution of the city-state and expanding into the institution of sovereign nations. This collective evolutionary process is now approaching its culminating period of coming of age by entering a global phase. According to Ervin Laszlo, philosopher of science, grand evolutionary synthesis is the most plausible theory in describing the emerging global system dynamics. He argues, through convergence, societies have achieved higher organizational levels and expanded their formal boundaries. This process has moved along history's arrow of time, from hunting-gathering up to post-industrial global order.[2]

The essential components of world citizenship are about the translation of the following concepts into a living reality:

1. Development of the consciousness of the universal in man
2. The knowledge and understanding of the earth as a single planet
3. The belief that nations and peoples of the world are mutually interrelated and interdependent

We need to foster the idea that each nation's interests are best served when considered in the broader context of the interests of the common good. World citizenship is not intended to eliminate a sense of legitimate patriotism but rather to create a more comprehensive loyalty to the world at large. Hence, world citizenship is an effective idea to release nations from unbridled nationalism and subordination to narrow economic, political, and military interests of any particular country. Its universal scope is beyond the national boundaries and responds to the generality of humanity's interests and welfare.

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[2] Laszlo, E. (1987). *Evolution, The Grand Synthesis.* Boston: New Science Library

The United Nations, its agencies, and recommendations, adopted by the various declarations and conventions of that organization, can contribute to world citizenship as a compelling idea for international understanding. To achieve this aim, the recommendation suggests the following objectives in order to be implemented by each member state of the United Nations:

(a) An international dimension and global perspective in education at all levels and in all its forms

(b) Understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values, and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations

(c) Awareness of the increasing global interdependence between peoples and nations

(d) Abilities to communicate with others

(e) Awareness not only of the rights but also of the duties incumbent upon individuals, social groups, and nations toward each other

(f) Understanding of the necessity for international solidarity and cooperation

(g) Readiness on the part of the individual to participate in solving the problems of his community, his country, and the world at large.

5. <u>Religious strife: a major barrier to international security</u>

The resurgence of fanatical orthodoxies, as a worldwide phenomenon, and their attempts to dictate the social policy, mostly with the intention of political gains, by promoting religious bigotry and hate against those whom they perceive as infidels (anyone who does not exercise their ideological dogmas) are contrary to the very spiritual purpose of religion and universal ethical principles.

We need to acknowledge and respect other faith traditions and try to build bridges of understanding among divergent religious groups. This approach also reflects the idea that all the world's major religions have a common moral foundation. Differences in religious value systems are caused by time, space, and historically conditioned socio-cultural milieu within which diverse religious traditions have appeared.

6. __Equality of the sexes__

Emancipation of women is one of the essential prerequisites of peace, unity, and justice. We need to cultivate a global culture and create international mechanisms to advance equality between men and women. The equality between men and women would be achieved if women are granted equal opportunities, rights, and privileges and encouraged to arise and organize for actively participating in world affairs. The consequence of these achievements will advance greater feminine ideals toward peace and coexistence.

7. __Universal education and free dissemination of knowledge__

Despite significant progress, it is a well-known fact that the world is still experiencing a global imbalance of knowledge, schooling, and illiteracy. This situation has created a vicious cycle of poverty, oppression, injustice, and social and economic stagnation. We need to advance universal education and eliminate illiteracy. At present, in 21 Century, we have a high percentage of children in the world who have either no education or inferior education. On the other side, we have a little interest in children; they have the most sophisticated education system with the latest technology and classroom. The same applies to the university gap in societies where the rich get the best and the poor get nothing.

General education and especially moral education are essential to solving society's problems; that is why education must be freely provided to every child in the world. Universal education is the single means by which the problem of inequality in the world can be addressed. To achieve this goal, creating a global education policy and curriculum under an international agency (for example, the United Nations) is necessary. While the content and methods of educational activities vary from culture to culture (based on their specific needs and backgrounds), the global educational structure provides the necessary conceptual framework for social and economic development and criteria for literacy. The main goal will be to satisfy the common needs (both the material and qualitative needs) of humanity, uplift the standard of living, and provide higher meanings and values of life for the world's entire population.

After COVID-19 and the experience we had from around the world on distance learning, the educational institutions have gained new insight that could revolutionize the world approach to education. The whole education system should be revised and reconsidered to allow more students worldwide to access knowledge and learning. Particularly in remote areas, students should be directed more towards creativity, research, and distance learning.

These issues and principles, either as guidelines for the educational policy or as dispositions to be fostered by curriculum processes, provide a unifying conceptual framework for a new social reality toward which education aims to be directed.

8. **Global governance**

A mechanism of global governance can facilitate the organization of human affairs much more feasible to the extent that global governance is not an ideology, nor is it a theory or way of thinking; rather, it is a social and historical reality. Although free trade and information technology, otherwise referred to as computer-based technology, are dimensions of a global system, the definition and nature of global governance go far beyond trade and technology. It refers to a process that includes the totality of essential human relations, both in trade and economics and in the field of politics and culture worldwide. It is a current that continuously provides the means for the unity and composition of societies and human relations. The intensification of social relations worldwide impacts every neighborhood and remote corner, even those that occur thousands of miles away. The global boundaries seem to be so narrow that the physical and geographical distance cannot limit human interaction flow from one geographical boundary to the next.

The concept of global governance is gradually gaining momentum as more statesmen and business leaders realize the challenges of managing the affairs of an interrelated and interdependent world with outmoded mechanisms of 19th-century nationalism. The second half of the twentieth century has produced a different kind of world from that of generations past, one that faces problems and challenges that are not limited to a specific people, country, or even region. The potentially devastating effects of global warming, massive starvation, nuclear weapons proliferation, multiplying regional military conflicts, and global pandemics

pose a threat to every nation and every citizen in the world. As these problems grow, so too does the realization that any hope of their solution resides in a level of global interaction and cooperation, which is unprecedented in humankind's history. After the sudden outbreak of the COVID 19, former U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown made an astute observation when he urged world leaders to create a temporary form of global governance to deal with the coronavirus crisis. "This is not something that can be dealt with in one country," he told the British newspaper. "there has to be a coordinated global response."[3] Likewise, King Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussain, King of Jordan, remarked, "it's time to return to globalization. But this time, let's do it right."[4] Along the same line, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged warring parties across the world to lay down their weapons in support of the more significant battle against COVID-19: the common enemy that is now threatening all of humankind.[5]

Many believe that Global governance was born from the beginning of the modern sociocultural revolution. Its roots go back to man's inherently social nature that human beings cannot live alone and are naturally impelled to lay the foundations of civilization and perpetual progress. Humans need other humans. Knowledge, scientific discoveries, and even human values are formed in the context of ever-increasing global relations. This relationship has become broader and more complex in the course of historical developments, and today it has become an inevitable reality essential for human survival. As British sociologist Anthony Giddens said in an interview, "I was then, and am today, a believer in the crucial importance of active government – which however should not be equated simply with the state but can come also from a range of other agencies. I was then, and am now, a believer in developing mechanisms of global governance, deeply challenging though that is." He also acknowledged that global governance might sound like a pipe dream, but the "range of agencies, groups of

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[3] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/mar/26/gordon-brown-calls-for-global-government-to-tackle-coronavirus

[4] https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/its-time-to-return-to-globalization-but-this-time-lets-do-it-right/2020/04/27/b5e8b442-88b4-11ea-8ac1-bfb250876b7a_story.html

[5] https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972

nations and international organizations trying to work together to deal with global problems" is an indicator of the need for such mechanism.[6]

9. __Global ethics__

As religious fanaticism, cultural divide, and political polarization are currently on the rise and fueling global conflict, the world is engaged in a race between the widening of the fault lines of global structure and a call for universal ethics comprising the essential values of humanity, faith traditions, and world civilizations' cultural heritage. Global ethics cannot survive on wishful thinking; mechanisms of global governance and principles of collective security and international law are needed to counter the raw self-interest and savagery that lurk beneath the veneer of our civilization. It has been argued that ethics and morals are the foundation of good governance, and the difficulties of modern democracies arise from a broken moral system. Modern democracy, which began in Europe, was a historical movement aimed at propagating ethical standards of fundamental freedoms, human rights, rule by the people, and overall refinement of the political and economic systems. Ethics of democracy and other provisions of modernity are squarely rooted in the social evolution of humanity and hence are in a state of becoming and evolving. Ideal democracy is a process and not a phenomenon to be mechanically created and installed. Democracy, intimately linked with the fluctuation of group behavior, is continuously tested and refined in the machinery of social and political change. Hence, it should not be perceived as the immutable system of government and, as some have argued, the final chapter of the world's intellectual, political, social, and cultural development. Democracy is not the end of history; it is merely an effective mechanism for the best ideas to prevail and a milieu for curbing the unscrupulous practice of authority.

Democracy fails to function if social ethics and human character are corrupted by materialism and desire for power. Democracy works and modifies itself when the human

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[6] Interview with Global Dialogue, https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/sociology-politics-and-power-an-interview-with-anthony-giddens

character is progressively refined, and human nature's propensity for transcendence is cultivated to transforms the mere existence of human life into loftier domains of meanings and values.

Democracy has no choice but to adapt itself to the ethical forces of international collaboration and coexistence, which are the driving force of the emerging world system. We know the mechanism of self-interest has been a part of the natural evolution of humanity. However, there is evidence that the curve of self-interest is exhausting its primary role in social change. It is losing its long-held ground in the face of the emerging realities of emerging global consciousness. The emerging trends, far from being wishful thinking, are already born and generate profound changes in the international society's social and economic structures. Globalization, so far, has been driven by the forces of information technology and multinational corporations. Ethical concerns, however, have made significant inroads into the refinement of these forces. It is now widely accepted that trade and other economic activities are only the means by which genuine human development in its multifaceted manifestations can be realized.

The consciousness of global ethics recognizes human beings as essentially spiritual and transcendental. The materialistic, mechanistic, and reductionist definition of human nature is being replaced by the notion that human individuals are autonomous, self-reflective, and seek the ultimate purpose of reflecting meanings and values in their lives. Contemporary societies are so imbued with conflict and violence that many have given up hope and accepted the idea that aggression is an integral part of human character and therefore ineradicable. Many psychological and social theories have given undue attention to aggressive instinct and hatred as a powerful force in human nature. Religious views that perceive man as a perpetual captive of his original sin may also reinforce the idea that violence is an ineradicable phenomenon. Hence, we need a new definition of human nature based on the essential dignity of every human life. That recognition lies at the core of building a new world. Floyd W. Watson, in his book The Idea of Man, describes far-reaching consequences of ideas about human nature: "If it is true, in general, that ideas have consequences, then man ideas about man have the most far-reaching consequences of all. Upon them may depend the structure of

government, the pattern of culture, the purpose of education, the design of the future and the human or inhuman uses of human beings."[7]

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[7] Watson, F. (1976). *The Idea of Man,* New York: Delacorte Press, p. 11–12.