

Le Grand Menage The G8 And Multilateral System Reform

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Diagnostics : Global Institutional Mismanagement

Mounting evidence suggests that the world is presently *institutionally mismanaged*, meaning that it does not have the proper institutions to meet current and, a fortiori, future challenges. If we were to use a contemporary computer metaphor we need a new “*operating system*” for the governance of Planet Earth. The present global governance OS is dysfunctional. It is based on the uneasy interaction between six major components.

- **Component 1 (The Mother Board)** :191 nation state governments wielding nominal "sovereignty" but in reality, unable to effectively meet challenges which are increasingly transnational and global (financial crises, climate change, war against terrorism, threat of pandemics etc.)
- **Component 2 : The “Great Powers”** mainly the G8, dominated by the sole remaining superpower the United States, strong enough to destroy the world but not powerful enough to govern it all by itself
- **Component 3 : Major multinational corporations** who are called upon to play, willy-nilly, not only an economic but an important governance role in the world system.
- **Component 4 : The Hackers.** Secret societies, special interest groups, organized religious sects, criminal and terrorist groups exerting major influence in world networks and which like computer hackers can destroy the operating system or hijack it to their own use,
- **Component 5 : The NGOs** claiming to represent Civil Society and the Common Citizen and empowered by modern communication technology and the Internet to challenge and impede decisions made by the first four and introduce new ideas and concepts in world system management
- **Component 6 : The Multilateral System of IGOs** with varying degrees of efficiency and diminishing legitimacy. Its principal sub-component, the United Nations and its family of affiliated institutions was designed in 1945-1950 to meet the immediate challenges of the Second World War. Appended to that core are dozens of regional and non-regional Intergovernmental Organizations. All are experiencing a severe crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness

These six components are not well integrated. To continue the computer operating system metaphor they work with improvised patches here and there, creating conflicts and incompatibilities and slowing the overall systemic performance. Crashes are frequent, unpredictable and often unexplained (as in the Windows operating system) and the “blue Screen of death” is forever looming as a sword of Damocles upon the world system.

For all these reasons it is time for a grand ménage, major housekeeping as it were and the design of a fresh “Operating System for the Governance of Planet Earth”. The systemic change is, obviously not an overnight process. It is a long term endeavor which will not replace the “petit ménage” or minor housekeeping which must continue. However, reliance on the petit ménage

alone will produce just more improvised patches, more inter-component conflicts and increase the probability of major crashes, tsunamis as it were, not only physical but societal.

How Can the Grand Menage be Implemented?

The actual *implementation* of a new operating system can only be achieved by the 191 countries holding titular sovereignty. Once a coherent set of proposals are in place, the change will most likely be lead by the Great Powers (The G8 and other similar groups, present or future. However, if the new operating system is to possess any legitimacy, it will have to go through a “beta” phase or testing with, deliberate, three major set of players (1) governments (2) corporations and (3) Civil Society. What is needed is a *pre-negotiating forum* involving the above three (a rarity in today's world where, in most cases, sovereignty-holders meet in intergovernmental conferences (G8, OECD, IMF, WTO), corporations and celebrities meet at Davos like gatherings and civil society meets in Porto Allegre type venues, ... with little interaction between all three.

The new international initiative, *The School of Athens* has as its principal objective the **exploration of new ways of governing our world** through the use of an ongoing, highly focused pre-negotiating forum, meeting in Athens annually, but supported by a global think tank, probably based in Canada and France. The inspiration comes from the original school of Athens which was Plato’s academy, a center of learning and enlightened discussions on politics, philosophy economics and life in general. The SOA would therefore be a good sounding board to test new ideas on global change. At the other extreme is the G8, a very powerful, small elitist club which although not representative of the world, is able to make decisions and implement them.

An informal partnership between the G8 and initiatives such as the School of Athens, probably mediated by the G8 Research Group could, by its combined strength, advance the cause of a better world governance. Ideas and proposals hatched by the pre-negotiating forum could eventually find their way to the sherpas and sous-sherpas of the G8 and ultimately to the political summiteers themselves. In this sense the G8 could become one of the principal *clients* of the School of Athens and other similar initiatives with feedback loops from the G8 Research Group back to the pre-negotiating fora. The modalities of such a partnership could be worked out over time but the potential is there and should be exploited.