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# One World

## Are we ready for rule by ‘the party of global governance’?

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Whatever else the grandiose project of “building Europe” may have accomplished—and at this point the entire edifice seems to be teetering—it has proven an enormous boon to social scientists and legal scholars. Scores of research centers, study groups, and commissions have been created both in Europe and America to explore the myriad issues relating to “European integration.” With generous funding from numerous universities, foundations, business corporations, and from the European Union itself (under the names of one or another of its countless agencies), researchers have done very well for themselves while making Europe among history’s most studied subjects.

For Americanists like myself, this extravagance has been not only an object of envy—no long weekend jaunts to Budapest for us—but also a matter of perplexity. No one denies Europe’s importance: It is wealthy, cultured, and until recently was the center of power in the world, as well as the source of many of its woes. But how these advanced states, which are no longer inclined to or capable of conducting war against each other, should coordinate their governing structures would seem to be a question of local interest, not a focal point of concern for the world beyond. Even the plan, now in limbo, to append Turkey to Europe, which probably struck many here as being at odds with both geographical reality and common sense, was a matter for the parties themselves to determine.

Except for one thing. To advanced thinkers—those who ponder questions of political philosophy, the future of governance, and the fate of international affairs—the construction of Europe has never really been just about Europe. It has been the keystone of a plan to reconfigure how political life in the world should be organized and how humanity should confront its common problems. Europe was meant to serve as the model for a new world order, one in which nation-states would cede their old, narrow claims to rule themselves and gradually transfer power to supra-national governing authorities.

Building Europe thus proceeded in parallel with an international project designed to create structures of global governance, as illustrated by United Nations protocols and conventions for human rights and for the elimination of racism and discrimination (CERD), and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Enter John Fonte, Hudson Institute senior fellow, whose excellent new book seeks to explain the nature of this project, describe its development over the past couple of decades, and detail some of its effects on international relations. This analysis serves only as a prelude, however, to Fonte’s larger purpose, which is to render a judgment on this project. Though it has made much progress over the past 20 years, Fonte makes clear that it has not yet won the day. Nations, especially the United States, still have a choice: Americans can live free, or submit.

Fonte has written what the French call a *plaidoyer*—an analytic work that culminates in advocacy of a point of view and course of action. Against what he sees as the growing threat posed by the multiplying incremental steps to pool or share sovereignty, Fonte defends the integrity of the democratic nation-state, which he sees as the most appropriate unit for structuring political life in our age. As a thinker with a practical bent, Fonte speaks much of the time from the perspective of an American citizen, pointing out how some of the new global institutions have interfered with the pursuit of American policy, as when ICC prosecutors sought to investigate American soldiers for war crimes in Afghanistan, or undermined our friends, as when an NGO Forum held concurrently with the U.N. World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001 condemned Israel as a “racist apartheid state” guilty of genocide.

But Fonte also views the issue from a theoretical perspective, presenting the reflections on global governance by Dante, Kant, Alexandre Kojève, and Leo Strauss. His theoretical judgment confirms his practical assessment. World governance, under whatever guise, is incompatible with human liberty: “independent self-government in the sovereign

liberal democratic nation-state is preferable to all forms of global governance.”

A new phenomenon needs a name, and Fonte is ready with the label “the party of global governance.” Those supporting this party at any given moment, as one would expect, include many who have signed on without believing in its principles in order to promote a temporary interest, as in the case of the nations at Durban that were motivated by anti-Americanism or hatred of Israel. To understand the real driving force of the party, Fonte separates the opportunists from the genuine adherents. The party’s nexus of theoretical ideas have had their home in the West. Its greatest strength is in Europe, where it has shaped the EU, but it also has an important following in America, especially in universities, think tanks, and parts of the foreign policy commentariat. It enjoys some support, as well, in certain third world outposts, which are sustained by various NGOs and Western foundations.

What is it, Fonte asks, that “global governancers” (not a term likely to stick) really want? No great political project is ever just about form or structure—in this case, supranational authority—but about a notion, however vaguely defined, of what is the good or just. Part of the good for global governancers, in line with almost all supporters of world government over the ages, is to produce a more peaceful world by creating a restraining force above competing nations. For this reason, the global governancers are hostile to all forces that favor the particularism of a nation (like the Chinese) or that favor an idea of universalism that by definition excludes many (like followers of Islam).

It is obvious—and leading globalist thinkers are not so naïve as to believe otherwise—that the greater part of the world today falls into these camps. But, to use language that global governancers would never dare utter in public, many of the adherents of these particularisms and religions are backwards. They can be brought along to a more advanced state by tutoring them, humoring them, and by a new strategy for the once openly imperialist West, of making concessions: apologies for past exploitation, acknowledgment of group rights for minorities in Western countries, and acceptance of speech codes to avoid offending certain non-Western groups. By patiently waiting things out while simultaneously creating new international institutions, global governancers hope to slowly reshape the non-Western world.

The greatest challenge to this party therefore turns out to come not from the backward parts of the world but from opponents within its advanced regions. Those in the West who cling stubbornly to their nations, their heritages, and their ideas of universalism constitute the greatest threat to the globalist project. For this reason, it makes sense for global governancers to single out for special criticism the states that continue to support the idea of the nation: the United States, with its widespread view of “exceptionalism,” and Israel, with its defense of the cause of a particular people—and the thinkers, mostly conservative, who continue to defend national sovereignty. For this reason also, it is logical for global governancers to engage in a campaign to replace civic education, which is designed to help build citizens, with programs of global studies, which are intended to cultivate a cosmopolitan disposition.

Forging a structure of peace is only part of what the global governance party claims to espouse. Its adherents also seek a better world that promotes the cause of humanity, and they justify themselves by citing the standard litany of sanitized progressive values: tolerance, justice, rights, and democracy. Taking this statement of intentions at face value, Fonte nevertheless asks what is lost. He is at his best in doggedly holding onto the pant leg of global governancers by insisting that they give an honest accounting of what they mean by democracy. Fonte invokes against them the charge of creating a “democratic deficit” which, at a time when we have all learned to live with deficits, is probably far too polite a term.

In reality, global governance means the loss of the possibility of humans to govern themselves in a meaningful way. This possibility, as defenders of the republican idea have from the outset maintained, can only be exercised inside a community of some limits, limits that in ancient times were traced by the city-state and in our age less vigorously by the nation-state. Democracy for the party of global governance thus turns out to be not a name for self-rule but for a set of prescribed outcomes. Promoting democracy so understood becomes far too important to leave to most people. It is a task to be reserved for trained experts, adept at the art of gently massaging the meaning of words and governing behind a veil of acronyms and legalisms.

In the face of this plan for a gentle despotism of humaneness, it concedes too much to say that its main problem lies in its mistaken means to a good end. It is the end itself that is flawed. The progressive conception of humanity lacks an appreciation of both human greatness and humility. The party of global governance is not one I would ever join, even if it could win a majority. Nor, I suspect, would John Fonte.

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