A World Community of Democratic Nations

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Abstract

To deal effectively with the urgent global challenges which confront us, we need a more effective system of global governance, i.e. some form of global parliament. This would be perhaps the ultimate form of supranational democracy. It has been the aim of the world federalist movement ever since World War II. The goal is hardly going to be reached overnight, and will require a stage-by-stage evolutionary process, following the example provided by the integration of Europe.

The basic principles which should underpin the global parliament include universality, that it should represent all citizens of the world, and democracy, to remove the possibility of autocracy or tyranny overtaking the government. These principles are not mutually compatible at present, but the first stages of the global integration process could be undertaken now, anticipating that the democratic principle of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, will eventually gain worldwide acceptance.

Next we discuss the possible routes to a global parliament. The world federalist movement WFM-IGP has always concentrated on reform of the United Nations, only to be stymied by the rigidity of the UN Charter. In recent times, the movement has concentrated on reforms that do not require any amendment of the Charter. We believe, however, that the easiest and most likely route towards a genuine global parliament actually begins by integrating the democracies, emphasizing the principle of democracy over that of universality in the early stages.

A detailed discussion of a possible first step along this route is discussed. It is suggested that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization be reformed to accept membership from democratic countries outside the North Atlantic area, to become a world security community of democratic nations. At the same time, a qualified majority voting scheme should be introduced wherever possible within the organization's councils, to eliminate the veto problem. The organization should explicitly declare that it will only undertake operations in external countries if such operations are sanctioned by the UN Security Council, in accordance with international law. It should also set up its own court system to adjudicate any dispute between its members. The organization already has the associated North Atlantic Assembly, which could provide the embryo of an eventual elected parliament.

This would be only a natural continuation of recent trends within NATO, and would turn the organization into a genuine global community following the European model. It could act as a strong right arm to the Security Council on the world stage. Finally, it is suggested that the OECD, which has a very similar membership, should also be folded in to the new Community, to provide development assistance to more backward members along similar lines to the European structural adjustment funds, and thus provide a major incentive for new members to join the organization.

Such a community would form a natural starting point for the evolution of a genuine global parliament over time.