Common Good State: The Next Phase of Human Societies

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"Government is actually the worst failure of civilized man. There has never been a really good one, and even those that are most tolerable are arbitrary, cruel, grasping, and unintelligent."

H. L. Mencken

"The State itself, mindful of its responsibility before God and society, should be a model of prudence and sobriety in the administration of the commonwealth. Today more than ever the acute world crisis demands that those who dispose of immense funds, built up on the sweat and toil of millions, keep constantly and singly in mind the common good. State functionaries and all employees are obliged in conscience to perform their duties faithfully and unselfishly, imitating the brilliant example of distinguished men of the past and of our own day, who with unremitting labor sacrificed their all for the good of their country."

DIVINI REDEMPTORIS. Encyclical promulgated on 19 March 1937 by Pope Pius XI

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Introduction

The terrorist attacks on the United States highlight the new dangers to human progress and survival. The media published many theories concerning the motives and backgrounds of the terrorists. Past manifestations of human violence had their own causes. The genocides of Nazi Germany were based on racism. The mass murders of Stalin and Mao were justified by alleged capitalist exploitation of workers. The terrorists attacking America claimed religious justification for their evil deeds. But a more realistic explanation is based on the major differences among human societies.

Most of the underdeveloped countries of the world suffer from extreme poverty, ill health, environmental destruction, low quality of life, and a feeling of humiliation when comparing themselves to the developed world. These conditions are exacerbated by the reality that the problems of many countries are not solved — and are even made worse — by incompetent and even corrupt governments. The desperate conditions of existence for many in these societies — as compared to the high standards of living in the advanced countries — then provide a fertile ground for the terror planners and executers.

The recently published "Freedom in the World 2011: The Authoritarian Challenge to Democracy" by the Freedom House (a Washington DC-based think tank that monitors political and civil liberties) explains the causes of the negative human conditions. Of the world's population of 6.8 billion, only 45% live in "free" societies. Of course, there is a strong relationship between political freedom and economic development. The "partly free" or "not free" countries control the remaining 55% of the human populations, or 3.9 billion human beings.

Diversion of Resources from Human Needs

Armed with increasingly powerful weapons, military forces rule or dominate much of the world's population. If we count the totalitarian (not free) and authoritarian (partly free) governments, which could not exist without military force, more than half the world's population lives under direct or indirect military rule. But even in democratic countries huge amounts are spent every year on maintaining their military forces and on weapons research and procurement. These expenditures by necessity are diverted from solving or alleviating the many social and economic problems of the world. Totalitarian and authoritarian leaders of their countries find it more useful to maintain large armed forces than to increase the living standards of their oppressed subjects.

This diversion of resources from human needs creates the following negative conditions:
- 1.4 billion people live in absolute poverty
- 1.2 billion lack basic health care and sanitation
- 1 billion people suffer from malnutrition
- 15% of the world's population is illiterate
- There are 36 million refugees and displaced persons from war and violence
- This is accompanied by much environmental destruction — deforestation, soil erosion, desertification.

Analyzing and understanding the fundamental causes of the support of terrorism enable us to develop the solution. **We have reached a situation where we have to shape our future into the right direction with new social inventions.**

As we begin the 21st century, the dangers to human survival multiply. A rapidly growing world population is afflicted in many countries with a harmful way of thinking. An emotional mindset, which is conducive to enmity against different clans, tribes, nations, ethnic groups, religions and others is reinforced by logical inventions of technologies. Thus, authoritarian leadership can use communications and military technologies to gain and stay in power, frequently by waging war against domestic opposition or neighboring countries. Religious fundamentalists are using electronic communications to spread their message of hate. Even in democratic countries many politicians use racial or religious appeals in their election campaigns. This fatal human weakness explains the negative conditions of many societies and nations.

The Development of Human Societies

Physiologist and evolutionary biologist Jared Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* provides a basic classification of human societies as evolved from the primitive origin of our species.

"**Bands** are the tiniest societies, consisting typically of 5 to 80 people, most or all of them close relatives by birth or by marriage. In effect, a band is an extended family or several related extended families." Chimpanzees and gorillas also live in bands, but today human bands exist only in remote parts of New Guinea and Amazonia.

The next stage of human society development is the **tribe.** The tribe "...differs in being larger (typically comprising hundreds rather than dozens of people) and usually having fixed settlements." Both bands and tribes lack a bureaucracy, police force, and taxes. Their economies are based on reciprocal exchanges between individuals or families, rather than on tribute paid to a central authority.

The subsequent stage of human society development took place in the Fertile Crescent around 5500 B.C., with the emergence of **chiefdoms.** Chiefdoms were considerably larger than tribes, ranging from several thousand to several tens of thousands of people. The problem of potential internal conflict among thousands of people was solved by the appointment of "one person, the chief, to exercise a monopoly on the right to use force."

The final stage of society development is the modern **state.** The first states emerged around 3700 B.C. in Mesopotamia, but today they rule all the world's habitable surface. "Central control is more far-reaching, and economic redistribution in the form of taxes is more extensive in states than in chiefdoms. Economic specialization is more extreme." "Internal conflict resolution within states has become increasingly formalized by law, a judiciary and police."

All existing societies now have complex centralized organizations. There are several obvious reasons for this human condition:

• Conflict between unrelated strangers require centralized authorities to monopolize force and resolve conflicts.
• Communal decisions in large societies can only be made by a structured and centralized authority.
• Large societies require a redistributive economy facilitated by a centralized authority.
• Densely populated regions require large and complexly organized societies for proper functioning.

While the development of human societies was strongly facilitated by the creation of centralized states, a negative condition emerged in parallel with these developments:

"Considerations of conflict resolution, decision making, economics and space thus converge in requiring large societies to be centralized. But centralization of power inevitably opens the door — for those who hold the power, are privy to information, make the decisions, and redistribute the goods — to exploit the resulting opportunities to reward themselves and their supporters." Taken to an extreme, this condition converts many societies into "complex kleptocracies."

Kleptocracy: *A government characterized by rampant greed and corruption.*

Kleptocratic governments are very common in authoritative societies. But even in democracies politicians and other powerholders are corrupted by their desire to obtain power and maintain it. Their need to gain and hold office (and power) requires contributions from special interests. These in turn expect and receive favorable legislation, government contracts and other economic and financial benefits. This excessive shifting of resources to the well-to-do ensures that many social and economic problems remain unresolved. In effect, a form of mild kleptocracy comes into existence, based on the human weaknesses of greed and hunger for power. The recent Enron scandal disclosed that even the highly democratic political system of the United States can be tainted by this weakness.

Negative Social Developments

While the development of human civilization provided great advances in science, technology and general prosperity, some negative conditions also emerged. As human societies evolved from bands to states, basic human characteristics shared with other primates remained. The many institutions of civilization converted the human savages into intelligent and civilized beings, with ambitions even to extend into space and the exploration of other planets. But frequently the institutions of humankind are controlled by men and women more interested in power and domination than in advancing human survival and progress.

These traits then transform many countries into harmful entities. Centralized decision making leadership facilitates the keeping of power. The establishment of powerful military forces is supported by modern technology able to develop affordable weapons of high killing power. Such institutions as secret police, supported by the military, can easily control populations and suppress dissent. The leadership of political institutions can use ideologies and other motivations to threaten and even attack other states, if motivated by their quest for power.

Thus the emergence of organized warfare paralleled the development of human societies. As societies emerged into chiefdoms and states, more violence-prone males became available for combat. Economic specialization provided the means to support standing armies. The development of increasingly sophisticated tools for killing — weapons — made the military forces more decisive. The powerholders of the more powerful states find it rewarding to threaten, attack and even conquer their neighbors. To defend against these threats, even relatively peaceful nations need to maintain armed forces, with the resulting wasteful military expenditures.

Worldwide Political Mismanagement

Both democratic and non-democratic governments suffer from a chronic condition of political mismanagement. This is not surprising in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian leaders use mass propaganda, brutal repression, control of the media, electronic surveillance, secret police and the military to stay in power. They have no mechanism for the orderly transition of authority — in fact, the sole purpose of such regimes is to stay in power, regardless of the costs to their unfortunate subjects. The continuous struggle against their own people leaves few resources to improve the economy and society. Thus the world's environmental and social problems continue to worsen, and human development is even regressing in many places. Only in countries where repressive governments are allowing market forces to emerge is there economic and social progress.

Democratic governments are also becoming the victims of political mismanagement. The need to gain office requires an excessive amount of time for non-governing activities, the courting of special interests, fund raising and the like. In some nations — such as Italy and Japan — links to organized crime exist. Pork barrel politics and political corruption are encouraged, and ethnic and class divisions are fomented. All this contributes to a gradual withdrawal of the electorate from the governing process, which is very damaging to democracy.

Political mismanagement is intensified by the war institution and militarism. In non-democratic countries the military either controls the government directly, or provides the means for maintaining the powerholders. In democratic countries the military is under civilian control. But in either situation the war institution and the military divert huge resources from their country's social and economic problems.

Failing and Failed States

Using available information, it is possible to be very specific about the conditions of countries of the world. The Carnegie Endowment and the Fund for Peace developed 12 indicators of the conditions, including such

obvious conditions as economic decline, human rights, refugees and displaced persons, and so on. Using this information, it was feasible to create a global ranking of 60 failed or failing states.

It is no coincidence that out of the 192 member states of the United Nations only 87 are full fledged democracies. Most of the other states are in various stages of political and economic disorder, in many cases becoming one of the 60 failed/failing states. This results in a new world disorder for the 21st century: "Overall, about 2 billion people live in insecure states, with varying degrees of vulnerability to widespread civil conflict."

Advancing Beyond the Traditional State

Jared Diamond's summation of the evolution of human societies discloses the weaknesses of the traditional or conventional state. Powerholders have special access to information, can make decisions and redistribute surplus goods. This centralized leadership and decision making enables them to reward themselves and their supporters at the expense of the general welfare of their societies. Throughout history this was the common characteristics of authoritarian governments. But even the more democratic and civil societies can be tainted by this negative potential. The numerous examples of "crony capitalism" — more accurately described as "klepto-capitalism" — in many countries throughout the world demonstrate the harm done even by non-authoritarian governments.

To overcome this potentially fatal trend, a new type of state has to emerge. The reinventing and strengthening of institutions to form a civil society will provide the infrastructure of the next development of human societies.

Servant Leadership

The phrase "Servant Leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, he said:

"The servant-leader *is* servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions…The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature."

"The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?"

Today the concept of servant leadership is promoted by the Greenleaf Center of Servant Leadership, an international non-profit organization headquartered in Indiana, USA. In their programs and services the focus is on business, educational and non-profit organizations. To advance human progress and survival it becomes necessary to greatly expand the concept of servant leadership. The frequently failed/failing traditional state requires a new ingredient:

Traditional State + Servant Leadership = Common Good State

Common good: 1. A desirable end for government or public policy, which is good for the whole society. 2. The communal approach to the structuring and operating of a society, to reach an optimum level of economic and moral achievement and satisfaction for its participants.

The Common Good State

The *common good state* would modify the traditional state's institutions and operations, so that a higher level of civilization would be achieved to ensure continued human survival and progress. The "Traditional State vs. the Common Good State" table summarizes the changes that should be made to the negative characteristics of the traditional state.

Traditional State vs. the Common Good State

Human Societies / Conditions	Traditional State	Common Good State
Human male characteristic of genetic predisposition toward violence	Targeted against other states and/or minorities; internally as gangs, organized crime, etc.	Institutions improved or developed to reduce/eliminate internal and external strife and violence
Violence prone males available	Thousands to millions	Control tendencies to male violence by strengthening families and other civic institutions
Levels of specialization to generate food surpluses and services	Intensive, with potentially huge surpluses of food and services	Continue technological and other developments to generate food surpluses, products and services for the common good
Emergence of governing institutions and philosophies	Centralized decision making leadership, supported by complex bureaucracies	Decentralize decision making activities to civic institutions and convert bureaucracies into true public servants
Culture patterns formed by means of livelihood — e.g. cattle nomads, agriculturists, etc.	Institutions strongly influenced (through education, propaganda, etc.) by culture patterns	Educational and religious institutions revise their teachings to eliminate culture patterns encouraging enmities against other human groups
Ability to make war tools = weapons (lethality index)	Science, technology, industry and surpluses produce weapons of tremendous lethality	Weapons of mass destruction will be abolished for the common good of humankind
Technologies for controlling subjects and suppressing dissent	Very powerful technologies and institutions are available (secret police, military, etc.)	Citizen-serving leadership has no need for controlling subjects; legitimate grievances are encouraged to solve problems
Self-interest of institutional leadership to make war	Can be very high, depending on ideologies or psychopathic motivations	Citizen-serving leadership only interested in peace and prosperity for the common good
War promotion and conducting capabilities	Intensive war promotion efforts feasible, because of militarism, propaganda technologies, etc.	The common good state eliminates the need and capabilities for promoting and conducting war

Reaching the Common Good State

Obviously the concept of the common good is highly desirable for the continued survival and progress of humankind. However, a major obstacle remains in reaching it. How can people of highly diverse values, opinions and outlooks reach agreement on what is the common good?

Reaching the common good state becomes feasible, because rational procedures can be followed in setting up societal goals, and selecting the best public policy alternatives for implementing these goals for the common good. Our considerable intellectual and information resources will provide the means of accomplishment. Only a logical approach can enable us to identify our problems, their costs and the resources available for solving them, without the conflict that all too frequently accompanies major social or economic problems.

For the first time in human history, it is possible to develop and implement economic, social and public policy decisions designed for the needs of societies. An excellent example is the evolution of the conflicting

European countries into the European Union. This process was facilitated by such policies as the Marshall Plan and various unifying institutions, such as the European Common Market.

Implementing the Common Good State

The common good state, implemented worldwide, is a highly desirable evolution for the human species. But how can such a major change be accomplished?

Exploring the evolution of human societies provides the answer. Our species' social evolution started with bands. Each band occupied a small territory, and was continuously in conflict with other bands. Eventually a powerful band realized that it was more beneficial to absorb a defeated band into their group, instead of killing them. This converted bands into tribes, as other bands realized the benefits of a larger social organization and copied the institution.

As with bands, the tribes continued to struggle with each other for additional territories and resources. Again a successful tribe realized the benefits of uniting with other tribes to form chiefdoms. The success of chiefdoms in expanding their territories caused the other tribes to unite into chiefdoms.

The first government that could be considered the state (or city-state) emerged in Mesopotamia. The Sumerian chiefdom, using the resources of irrigated agriculture, was able to absorb other chiefdoms, and developed such social inventions as bureaucracy, priesthood, law, writing, factories and armies — all the attributes of the traditional state. To survive, other chiefdoms then gradually formed states. While much violence resulted from the interactions of states, they also facilitated the emergence of modern civilization.

The above examples suggest that the evolution of the common good state will follow the same model. **The most successful traditional state, realizing the need for human survival and progress, will initiate the first common good state.** The benefits of the new form of society will be so obvious that eventually all the failing traditional states will find it necessary to convert to common good states. Of course, the first common good state will find it useful to assist the other states to reach this desirable condition.

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