The Bahá'í Contribution to Cosmopolitan International Relations Theory

Dr. Nalinie Mooten
Republic of Ireland, University of Limerick

Introduction to IR and to the Theme of Cosmopolitanism[1]

"There is no such thing as a perfect theory embodying the final truth, for the truth which it is supposed to embody is in fact a thousand truths which constantly grow and change."[2]

Crawford shares the view that no intellectual field today suffers more "from the ambiguity of its subject matter, or the contestability of its theories" than International Relations.[3] This ambiguity can be explained by "the age of transition"[4] in which many claim we live in, or by the complex, and thus kinetic nature, of world politics in our times. Germane to this idea is that many processes working below or beyond the limited territory of the modern nation-state are challenging its ethos and so the very foundation of International Relations, thus contributing to a growing sense of "bewilderment". This sense of bewilderment, which denotes a notion of change in international politics, refers to the weakening of the powers of the nation-state due to the presence of extra-national forces, such as the question of human rights, the environment, increasing migration, modern slavery, and the global economy. This perplexity is, furthermore, linked to these global forces that destabilise the nation-state in its traditionally secure, self-sufficient, and unquestioned authority. Hence, scholars and politicians refer to the complexity of human interactions and relations, which foster a sentiment of confusion.[5] As Paul and Hall claim, "World politics in the twenty first century is likely to be more complex than in previous eras".[6] In Rosenau's eyes, such complexity has emerged from the increasing interdependence and interaction of societies, and, therefore, the

---

[1] Throughout this paper the initial IR will be used to designate International Relations Theory.

[2] Anwar Hussein Syed, *Walter Lippman's Philosophy of International Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 18

[3] Robert Crawford, *Idealism and Realism in International Relations: Beyond the Discipline*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 1

[4] The concept of the "age of transition" has been expressed by diverse authors such as: Ervin Laszlo, *The Inner Limits of Mankind: Heretical Reflections on Today's Values, Culture and Politics*, (London: Oneworld Publications, 1989); Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970); David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); or James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on Transnationalisation of World Affairs*, (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1980)

[5] "Conceivably we are so confused that even the fact of change perplexes us. Conceivably the forms of world politics have undergone alteration while the underlying structures continue essentially unmodified". (James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence,* p. 12).

[6] T.V. Paul & John Hall, *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11

transnationalisation of world affairs, which brings with it challenges for theorising IR.[7]

The existing sense of perplexity also arises from the fact that the diversity of political thought in the discipline is sometimes prone to bring manifold contradictory assumptions (especially within traditional orthodox IR theory) about human and political behaviours, which are not easily reconciled. These contradictory views are found in the two mainstreams of thought in International Relations, one known as realism or the classical tradition, and the other as liberal internationalism. Some – may be too simply – would say that realism is a pessimistic view of IR, and others that liberal internationalism is the optimistic voice of the subject.[8] If we take the view that liberal internationalism is in strict opposition to realism, it is possible to describe liberalism as an optimistic and progressive viewpoint that considers human nature either as good or as having the potential to overcome its evil components. Liberal internationalism is, however, not the only possible channel through which one can find a voice to express the dissatisfaction with a static/sceptic worldview. Indeed, Persram notes that there is simplicity in the account that there are many theories **'but really only two'** about the 'world'.[9] [Emphasis added] Beyond 'utopia'[10] and reality we find critical theories, including cosmopolitan democracy, critical international theory, feminist approaches, or postmodernism, which offer 'emancipatory' views, and call for the reconceptualisation of a world centred upon the fixity of the nation-state and power relations. Since realism offers a myopic vision, which emphasises short-term interests and the inevitability of conflict, I choose to concentrate on the "optimistic" and "emancipatory" voices of IR, which assert that change in international affairs is possible.[11] This relates to the idea that the realisation of the "good life" is not to be locked up within bounded units[12] and is a concern of the main approach scrutinised in this work: cosmopolitanism, or the cosmopolitan tradition. This tradition is used in two ways in this paper: firstly, as a description of the world around us, in particular, the development of transnational processes, and secondly, as a prescriptive or normative view of 'what the world should look like'.

---

[7] James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence,* 1

[8] See Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 49-66 and Robert Crawford, *Idealism and Realism,* 73

[9] Nalini Persram, "Coda, Sovereignty, Subjectivity, Strategy", in: Jenny Edkins, Véronique Pin-Fat & Nalini Persram, (eds.), *Critical Perspectives on World Politics*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, 165

[10] Since E.H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* in 1939, a label has been put on liberal international writers as "utopian" or "idealists". This body of thought has, thus, been denigrated since the inter-war period. "It is widely held that this critique had a devastating impact on the discipline". (Peter Wilson, "The Twenty Years' Crisis and the Category of Idealism in International Relations", in: David Long & Peter Wilson, (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Realism Reassessed*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 1).

[11] In this paper, it will be implicitly contended that beliefs can shape and influence our conduct. In other words, in IR, the adoption of a positive and optimistic vision, and the belief that peoples and states are fully able to use the faculty of reflection (belief) enhance the chances of building a more just and equitable world order (conduct/behaviour).

[12] Richard Devetak, "The Project of Modernity and International Relations Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 1995, 24 (1), 38.

This paper, which is based on various extracts of my doctoral work, will scrutinise cosmopolitanism within IR theory; present the Bahá'í model; and correlate it to a cosmopolitan approach in IR. Bahá'í thinking, on the one hand, represents a strong reinforcement of the cosmopolitan tradition of thought, underlining its validity and necessity, and on the other hand, centres on the concept of the 'oneness of humanity' in its belief-system, delineating a rearticulation of ethical cosmopolitan roots.[13] This principle reflects the sameness (which does not correspond to homogeneity, but instead draws on a commonality shared by humanity) of all human beings across the globe. In other words, it emphasises that humanity constitutes one race and a single people. To underline the non-homogenising effects of the oneness of humanity, Bahá'í writings always mention the latter "with its corollary of unity in diversity".[14] The Bahá'í model is not only based on the ethics of oneness, but also on a recommended scheme of global governance that gives practical expression to this principle. Accordingly, the Bahá'í cosmopolitan model supports the idea of moving away from an obsession with state sovereignty, and embraces the broader and more inclusive level of humanity that denounces unjustified division. Bahá'í views add force to the argument that the nation-state, as the primary unit of IR, has had its day, and thereby highlight the need to include more flexible non-state actors. Robert Cox has expressed the same idea when he avers that the state is just one of the forces that shapes the present world, and admittedly not the most important one.[15] The oneness of mankind, thus, needs to be recognised as international politics have accepted the naturalness of political divisions, and a system based on the spatial nature of the world. This principle is useful in highlighting the artificiality of the concept of a closed, homogeneous, and ethically deficient, nation. To another extent, it will be contended that as a sacred approach with origins in the East, the Bahá'í model can significantly contribute to a growing Western secular cosmopolitan approach whilst expanding its focus, thereby demonstrating the universality of the tradition.

The Nation-State as the Denial of the Oneness of Humankind

"Conceived of as an end in itself, the national state has come to be a denial of the oneness of mankind, the source of general disruption opposed to the true interests of its peoples…"[16]

---

[13] This implies the reiteration of the oneness of humankind and universal ethical values. The Stoics stressed the oneness of humankind and the unity of life, and "undermined the assumed natural political divisions between Greek and barbarian". (Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought*, New York: St Martin's Press: 1996, 202).

[14] Bahá'í International Community, "Global Action Plan for Social Development", Contribution to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations World Summit for Social Development, January-February 1994,

[15] Robert Cox in: Richard Devetak, "Critical Theory", in: S. Burchill, & A. Linklater, (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*, (2nd ed.), Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2001,.169

[16] Bahá'í International Community, "A Bahá'í Declaration of Human Obligations and Rights", February 1947,

As humankind is a natural unit, cosmopolitanism questions the nation-state, a divisive unit, as the principle actor in IR. In this way, cosmopolitanism challenges the notion of the natural permanency of a world community structured around divided national communities with forever distinct and unvarying populations. In a teleological sense, the nation-state is, thus, problematic on the grounds that it divides the human race, whose "reality" is one, and whose consequent aim is to reside in a world "polity". Benedict Anderson views the nation-state as an "imagined" and "limited" community as "no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind": "the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations".[17] Likewise, Eric Hobsbawn notes that nationalism, child of mother nation, represents an exclusive concept, "nationalism... excludes from its purview all who do not belong to its own nation, i.e. the vast majority of the human race".[18] Since the nation-state divides the human race, and oftentimes constructs aggressive and divisive borders, it cannot be the supreme or final expression of human relationships on the planet, as this would constitute a denial of our integral oneness. The nation-state embodies a citizen-alien relationship that excludes all those who do not reside within, whilst the cosmopolitan ideal ensures that all should have access to human rights (albeit with reference to specificity)[19] enshrined in a cosmopolitan law, which are not dependent on a spatial and limited unit for its application.

Indeed, how can humanity find its natural home in a unit that has given rise to xenophobia, genocide, or nationalism? The notion that the unit of the political state needs a homogeneous cultural nation has, as a consequence, led to excessive exclusivity and jingoistic intolerance. This idea has also encouraged the suppression of what is perceived as threats to a homogeneous community, and which ironically represents a completely illusory notion, a 'myth' or 'artefact'[20] due to the increasing cultural heterogeneity of its population that is caused by migration, diaspora, or multiculturalism. In this regard, the Aristotelian notion of a good life locked within a polis can no longer serve its purpose, and must be transposed onto a more inclusive cosmopolis. Undeniably, the breakdown of the nation-state system entails new conceptions of equality in terms of gender and race, thereby confirming that the oneness of humankind, which works towards the inclusion of vulnerable groups and the recognition of a diversified and yet single human race, should be given greater attention in world affairs.

---

[17] Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verson, 1991, 7.

[18] Hobsbawn in: Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in the Global Era*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, 9.

[19] For instance children's rights or women's rights will vary in their formulations whilst still part of a broader human rights regime.

[20] See Eric Hobsbawn, "Inventing Traditions", in Eric Hobsbawn & T.Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Here it is important to mention that feminist or postcolonial theories that work toward "equal rights" promote the idea of the deconstruction of dichotomies such as superior/inferior, male/female[21] (with "female" having here an inferior status). They mention the "political presence of newly empowered subjects" underlining diversity, multiculturalism, and environmentalism.[22] Azza Karam notes, "Emancipatory futures are inextricably linked to making the connections between local events and global ones, and doing so through resistance and accommodating difference, thus sharing in the kaleidoscope of power".[23] These paradigms also contribute to refining the cosmopolitan project not as a 'totalising' universal project, but as one that seeks to unite and restore dignity,[24] while preserving an enriching diversity. Booth referred to this revised cosmopolitanism as 'sensitive universalism.'[25]

Additionally, the nation-state represents a 'problem' in present day politics, as it is a confined unit that is given primary importance by IR through realist ideology, while its sphere of jurisdiction and influence have been rendered obsolete by more global processes. The nation-state, a particularistic unit, cannot solve problems which are increasingly global, and which likewise, demand global solutions. Indeed, there is enmeshment and interweaving of processes in terms of economics and culture[26] that cannot be locked within territorial confines. Globalisation[38], new technologies and the global and instant accessibility of information have transformed the way peoples interact with each other, becoming more integrated and closer than was hitherto possible thereby challenging state sovereignty. The latter, as a case in point, asserts principles of non-intervention that weaken claims to humanitarian intervention, strengthening the dichotomy between us/them and inside/outside. Human solidarity cannot be created within solidified borders: it has to be diffused through porous borders and an inclusive attitude of mind, i.e. a *denkungsart* that is advocated by cosmopolites. Accordingly, the nation-state cannot be treated as the ultimate unit within IR theory.

The Etymology and Evolution of Cosmopolitanism

The etymological root of "cosmopolitanism" finds its origin in the word "cosmopolis" made up of the words "cosmos" (universe) and "polis" (city). The original Greek definition of "cosmopolis", thus, refers to the universal

---

[21] Azza M. Karam, "Feminist Futures", in: Jan Pieterse Nederveen, (ed.), *Global Futures: Shaping Globalization*, (New York: Zed Books, 2000), 184.

[22] Braidotti, in: *Ibid.,* p. 177.

[23] Azza M. Karam, "Feminist Futures"*, p. 185.

[24] "A local community with open boundaries, mutual responsibility…and no will to racial classification is the political key to human dignity, worth, and freedom". (Kate Manzo, "Critical Humanism: Postcolonialism and Postmodern Ethics" in: David Campbell & Michael J. Shapiro, (eds.), *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, 177).

[25] Ken Booth, "Human Wrongs and International Relations", *International Affairs*, 1995, 71 (1), 119.

[26] With the movement of peoples across borders, culture is also carried across borders, which challenges the notion that culture can be kept 'safe' in a particular 'home'.

city of humanity, which requires dwellers to give meaning and life to its existence. The universal city, henceforth, goes hand in hand with a notion of citizenship, and to be more precise, world citizenship. It is also possible to trace the etymological roots of cosmopolitanism to the word "cosmopolite" which means "citizen of the world". This latter meaning is derived from the ancient Greek "kosmos" (world or universe) and "politês" (citizen). Thus, it is extremely relevant to correlate these two interpretations to the word "cosmopolitan", one being a political and emotional habitat, or universal city, and the other being the more personal, and not yet legalised affiliation to that sense of belonging, or world citizenship. The Stoics, who conceived of the whole universe as a home for world citizens, conveyed this idea in their teachings. "After all the etymology of cosmopolitan points to the ancient Greek word of the polis, and its members the politeis".[27]

Cosmopolitanism highlights the limitedness of political communities (the polis was criticised by Stoicism), which now correlates to the inadequacy of 'reasons of state' or 'reasons of political communities', when their fates are entwined.[28] Cosmopolitanism developed from being merely ethical, to more political in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and present forms of cosmopolitanism make use of both ethical and political arguments, especially with regard to an 'unequal globalisation' which must be brought under control if all are to share in its benefits.

Cosmopolitanism has three main principles: individuals (not states) represent the basis of political communities; the equal moral worth of all human beings; and the importance of developing principles which can all be shared with respect to differences.[29] "This larger, open-ended, moral perspective" Held notes, "is a device for focusing our thought, and a basis for testing the intersubjective validity of our conceptions of the good. It offers a way of exploring principles, norms and rules that might reasonably command agreement".[30] In other words, cosmopolitanism starts from a human perspective, rather than a state or a particular perspective, and positively asserts that as humans we share commonalities and the propensity to build peaceful societies.

Various strands of the tradition can be found in Stoic cosmopolitanism, liberal cosmopolitanism (Enlightenment and modern cosmopolitanism), and critical cosmopolitanism (a revisionist cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment), and share important points of convergence. They are projects of universal emancipation, targeted firstly at the promotion of 'universal community' (ethical and/or political), the eradication of war, the

---

[27] Ulrich K. Preuss, "Citizenship in the European Union: a Paradigm for Transnational Democracy?", in D Archibugi & D Held & M Köhler, (eds.), *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, 145.
[28] David Held, "From Executive to Cosmopolitan Multilateralism", in: David Held & Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, (Eds) *Taming Globalization: Frontiers of Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, 168.
[29] David Held, *From Executive to Cosmopolitan Multilateralism*, 168.
[30] Ibid.

protection of human rights and the environment, the alleviation of world poverty, and the safeguarding of cultural diversity. The project can be regarded as an attitude of mind (a feeling of belonging to a universal society of mankind, and not exclusively to one's nation-state), and as the desire to create 'world citizenship' institutions such as a global parliament, or an assembly of world citizens at the United Nations (**UN**). The history of these ideas is portrayed in Derek Heater's World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought. Cosmopolitanism contains various strands such as a legal cosmopolitanism (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or the International Criminal Court (**ICC**)), political cosmopolitanism (a global parliament, world government, or global governance), and moral cosmopolitanism, on which these two former notions are said to rest. As contended in this paper, these three "cosmopolitanisms" are interdependent.

Cosmopolitan thinking began with an ethical and philosophical ideal of 'world citizenship' embracing the whole cosmos or universe (and not only the world), and was characterised by the interplay of ideas, namely the ideas that the polis was not a self-sufficient and perfect socio-political unit, that moral considerations sustained by a system of natural law was essential, and that human beings, despite all their variations, constitute a single human species. This ancient cosmopolitanism eventually took another form in the Middle Ages, being transferred to ideas of universal 'religious' empires based, as it was the case with Christianity, on a Christian version of a universal Roman Empire (thoughts of World Empire, however, rarely extended beyond Christian lands).[31] With the demise of the idea of 'universal empire' that accompanied the emergence of an international system composed of confined states, a 'Westphalian system' of world order emerged in which new ideas were conceived to sustain the concept of a religious service to humankind. Even with the rise of states, the cosmopolitan ideal found its niche in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in secular programmes that were devised to appease relations between states, and which often represented embryonic plans for the United Nations or the International Court of Justice (**ICJ**). Most of them were, however, dominated by the fallacious notion that these relations were condemned to be between states or between heads of states, and (except for the notable exception of Crucé) were mostly governed by European schemes and the Christian religion. In addition to Crucé's ingenuity, Kant conceived of 'a third level', namely a cosmopolitan law sustained by world citizens that applies to the world as a whole, and not only to civil and international levels.

Cosmopolitanism has, thus, been the interplay of ideas of world citizenship and world state, the latter being predominant in the Middle Ages and Enlightenment, and the former being prevalent in ancient times, in 'Kantian'

---

[31] Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government*, 182

Enlightenment, and especially in the twentieth century (namely with critical theories such as cosmopolitan democracy). The cosmopolitan ideal has moved from an idea of moral cosmopolitanism, to expansionism based on the rights of rulers, and finally to the notion of the respect of peoples based on their rights and duties in the cosmopolis. As such, "It is highly unlikely that a renewed medieval Roman Empire would have made provision for any effective citizenly participation in the imperial political system." Cosmopolitan democracy theorists argue that global institutions should be governed by world citizens, and highlight the nation-state's limitations as it hinders the practice of global democracy and global values. The protection of human rights advocated by most cosmopolitans represents an activist cosmopolitanism.

Current cosmopolitanism can be illustrated by the inclination (Linklater calls it a 'moral anxiety') to help 'foreigners' on the grounds of a common humanity, due to suffering, starvation, poverty, in other words, a human duty to respect and protect human rights and justice. Indeed, cosmopolitanism undermines the nation-state by intervening beyond its limits, and by diluting the notion of 'foreigner', as it propounds the idea that morality does not end at national boundaries. Cosmopolitanism challenges the predominance of the nation-state on many fronts: firstly, as a result of our global and technological age, and secondly, due to the incapacity of the nation-state to foster morality beyond its boundaries (i.e. caring for 'foreigners' is not as relevant as caring for fellow-citizens). Furthermore, the reality of human oneness calls into question the discriminatory divisions fostered by the nation-state (the nation-state is most of the times a safe haven for citizens, but treats non-citizens in less 'significant categories' such as immigrant, refugee, alien i.e. it creates an other). No longer a philosophical speculation, or we might say an 'ideal', cosmopolitanism has become tangible as testified by numerous non-governmental organisations **(NGOs)**, the movement of peoples and ideas across borders, and the reality of dual and multiple loyalties and citizenships.

International organisations and a supranational unit such as the European Union **(EU),** and other regional bodies demonstrate the inadequacy of the nation-state, and the advantage to unite not only for common benefits, but also for increasing understanding and communication across porous borders. Cosmopolitanism, in our times, constitutes a reaction against material global interdependence, the impotence of the nation-state to satisfy our needs (functionalism), and the rejection of discriminatory prejudices based on gender, race, class, or nation (a reiteration of the oneness of humankind). We can, indeed, state that we are moving towards a more mature form of cosmopolitanism, namely a more sensitive cosmopolitanism that wishes to be identified with the constituency of the human species. Furthermore, the twentieth century has seen decolonisation (notwithstanding that the pernicious effects of slavery and colonisation have continued socio-political and psychological repercussions on the body of mankind), and technological

and communications revolutions (globalisation), which if managed in an inclusive way, offers inviting conditions for the realisation of a cosmopolis.

It is also relevant to note that the term "cosmopolitan" is presently used to define the reduction of state sovereignty in cases where other institutions collide with the nation-state's powers to decide.[32] Indeed, Mary Kaldor, who speaks in favour of "cosmopolitan theory" and transnational democracy, does not envisage the occurrence of a world state or government, but rather the surpassing of state sovereignty in certain instances. Cosmopolitans argue that the ever-increasing presence and participation of a global civil society, as manifested in the growing number of NGOs or intergovernmental organisations **(IGOs)**, and locally based grassroots social movements, constitute the upcoming signs of a political cosmopolitan reality testifying to the moral and economic interdependence of humanity. Indeed, cosmopolitan political reality now comes from the grassroots rather than from the top, implying that the people, who consider themselves as world citizens should be the true decision-makers. "[World] citizenship operates both 'vertically' and 'horizontally'. For example, a world citizen may wish to concentrate on campaigning for the reform of the UN or supporting organisations devoted to relieving world poverty".[33]

Numerous theories have been devised towards an international political system, in the forms of federalism, functionalism, or cosmopolitan democracy, which although differing in their manifold aspects, reflect the need for a cosmopolitan political agenda. Thus, cosmopolitanism is not solely a theory; rather it encompasses all of the theories of International Relations that transcend the nation-state (with or without questioning its existence): a cosmopolitan tradition rather than a theory of IR.

Realism, Liberal Internationalism, and Critical Theory

Realism – realpolitik, power politics – can be traced back to the Greek historian Thucydides in the fifth century BCE, or to Renaissance diplomat, historian and playwright Macchiavelli, and later with twentieth century figures such as Morgenthau or E. H. Carr, mostly influenced by the American critic and theologist Reinhold Niebuhr.[34] Realist IR is the most 'anti-cosmopolitan' strand of IR theory. Indeed, the unbridgeable gulf between domestic and international politics is a central theme in realist thought, whereas cosmopolitans envisage a form of world political organisation (not necessarily a world government) with universal moral principles.[35] Cosmopolitanism, hence, comes as the antithesis or critique of

---

[32] Daniele Archibugi, "Principles of Cosmopolitan Democracy", in: D. Archibugi, D. Held & M. Köhler, *Re-imagining*, (eds.), 216.

[33] Derek Heater, *World Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Thinking and its Opponents,* (London: Continiuum, 1992), 5.

[34] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 4.

[35] Andrew Linklater "Rationalism", in: S. Burchill & A. Linklater, (eds.), *Theories of International*

realist IR (the latter being one of the many theories of IR),[36] and therefore it is essential to review the characteristics of realism.

Several aspects of realist theory can be contrasted with the cosmopolitan tradition. More importantly, realists believe in the irreconcilability of the domestic and international spheres, whereas cosmopolitans envisage the pacifying of international relations through the promotion of the concept of 'humanity', thereby dismissing the relevance of a sound dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'international'. Realists emphasise the anarchic nature of international politics, which is opposed to the sovereign and secure character of the state, the basic unit of analysis in realism. The absence of anarchy in the domestic realm provides for the possibility of progress and security. By contrast, the international is characterised by the "endless competition for power and security in the world of states".[37] Hence, the international system is doomed to be controlled by power politics, which promotes little prospect for change and peace, and which, accordingly, impedes the imagining of a 'post-sovereign' system. In brief, cosmopolitans view international politics as a unified sphere in which the division between the domestic (internal) and international (external) should be reconciled. Indeed, for the cosmopolitan, the domestic and the international spheres are artificial divisions in the face of a common humanity, whereas the realist sees them as fixed in the realm of anarchy. For cosmopolitans, this flawed division prevents the fostering of the means by which a 'post-sovereign' world can be imagined, constructed, and improved upon, whereas for realists, this contention is fallacious as the world is divided along permanent and antagonistic boundaries.

Although the study of International Relations was born within 'idealism' after World War I (**WWI**), it "had been effectively refounded after World War II on realist premises, and has exerted its dominion as a paradigm in International Relations".[38] With the liberal internationalists claiming that people had a genuine desire for peace, and the power of world opinion would sustain the Wilsonian League of Nations, it was then easy, with the examples of Mussolini and Hitler, to describe these ideas as simply wrong.[39] Liberal internationalism was held to have false perceptions about human nature, and was perceived as a flawed world outlook. In the 1930s, Reinhold Niebuhr reflected on these matters, and argued that liberals exaggerated "the capacities of collectivities of humans to behave in ways that were truly

---

Relations, London: Macmillan Press, 1996, 93.

[36] These include Liberal Internationalism, the English School, Feminism, Marxism, Critical Theory, Postmodernism, and Green Politics.

[37] Andrew Linklater, *Rationalism,* 93.

[38] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, 28. The origin of the dissimilarities between the two perspectives can be found in the 'first great debate' between the realists and the 'idealists', which was centred on the possibility of the pacification of international society through a sense of moral obligation to human beings in the world. (Andrew Linklater *Rationalism*, p. 93.) In this debate, cosmopolitan concepts such as collective security, the rule of law, and peace are contrasted with the realist terms 'balance of power', 'anarchy', and 'sovereignty'. (At that time, cosmopolitan IR can be related to liberal internationalism.)

[39] Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations*, Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2001, 27.

moral".[40] This statement, thus, supports the realist view that morality is unattainable between collectivities, and stands opposed to the cosmopolitan belief that peaceful societies are attainable.

In the twentieth century, realism has had a great impact on International Relations as an academic subject, but has also influenced many American politicians (for example Kissinger), and can be said to have greatly shaped twentieth century world politics. Donnelly remarks, "Realism should not be ignored. But it should not be allowed to shape the study and practice of International Relations, as it has for so much of the past half-century".[41] It was mostly E. H. Carr, with The Twenty Years' Crisis: an Introduction to the Study of International Relations, who reshaped the discipline along more realist lines at the end of World War II, taking into account what he regarded as the 'neglected' factor of power. Carr stated that this work was "written with the deliberate aim of counteracting the glaring and dangerous effect of nearly all thinking, both academic and popular, about international politics in English-speaking countries from 1919 to 1939 – the almost total neglect of the factor of power".[42] To another extent, at that time, his aim was to discredit the other paradigm of International Relations, which he named utopianism.[43] Carr criticised the normative character of liberal internationalism, and its neglect of 'power' as a crucial factor in IR. Liberal internationalists, on the contrary, stressed the concepts of morality and altruism in global politics.

Realism, with the experience of the inter-war years, remained the main paradigm of International Relations, especially at the height of the Cold War and Super Power competition. However, realism did not go unchallenged, and was criticised in the seventies by proponents of the 'complex interdependence paradigm'.[44] As a response, this paradigm was discredited and opposed by the proponent of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz, who claimed that the notions of interdependence were extravagant.[45] Kenneth Waltz's main claim is centred on the belief that states operate in a self-help system (or in an anarchical international system), where no higher form of authority prevails. Moreover, they are only preoccupied with their own welfare and security, and regard other states as potential threats. This self-help system forces them to adjust their power, and to be constantly aware of the power position of other states, which gives rise to a balance of power regulating world affairs in an anarchical system.[46] Whereas Morgenthau in 'traditional realism' (as Waltz named it) argues that power is rooted in human nature,

---

[40] Ibid.
[41] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, 5.
[42] In: *Ibid.,* 27.
[43] For Carr, "utopianism" refers to liberal internationalism. Peter Wilson, *The Twenty Years Crisis*, 2.
[44] Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 41. In the seventies, Keohane and Nye, who introduced the notion of 'complex interdependence' and the presence of multiple international factors, presented a substantive alternative to realism.
[45] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations,* 30.
[46] *Ibid.,* 47.

"Waltz points to the anarchical condition of the international realm which he claims imposes the accumulation of power as a systemic requirement on states".[47] The latter treats the international system as a separate domain, whereas the former relies on reductionism. The main ideas of neo-realism are, thus, that anarchy and the distribution of power between states define the international system (as they shape state behaviour), and that states would not abandon egoism and self-interest for international order.

What is here relevant, especially in relation to cosmopolitanism, is that like realism, neo-realism still concentrates on the nation-state as the main unit. This state-centric view is in opposition to cosmopolitan views, which criticise the idea of the nation-state as a permanent and principal fixture of the international system, and which promote a normative international order where human values and acts of cooperation can prevail. There has been, nonetheless, an attempt to render realism more 'normative'. The English school of realists and rationalists has stressed the importance of international society or a world of states as opposed to universal categories such a humanity or sub-state entities.[48] Although the English school is often seen as part of realism and recognises conditions of anarchy,[49] it 'acknowledges that the sense of belonging to the community of humankind has left its civilizing mark upon the state and international relations".[50] This school of thought stresses the concept of international society: "the English school of International Relations shares with realist/neo-realist theorists the importance of anarchy, war, and balance of power, but only as ideas that shape political practice, rather than as laws of nature or unchanging phenomena deeply embedded in the international system".[51] International society can be depicted as sharing normative standards and rules, in the form, for example, of international law. International society, based on a system of states, can still share common aims, rules of conduct, and organisations – thus blending realist aspects with a more normative outlook.

Realism, Human Nature and the Centrality of Territorially Organised Entities

Realism, even if it acknowledges the potential for change, confirms that it occurs within the limits of the struggle for power enshrined in a static human nature. Gilpin notes that realism is distinguished by its "pessimism regarding moral progress and human possibilities".[52] Human nature is

---

[47] Scott Burchill, *Realism and Neo-Realism*, p. 78. The systemic level relates to theories that conceive of causes operating on the international level, in addition to national and individual levels. Reductionist theories, for Waltz, only operate on the national and individual levels. (Ibid., 92).

[48] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations,* 52.

[49] Wight, in a very realist fashion, contended that the domain of international relations is "incompatible with progressivist theory". Martin Wight, in: A Linklater, , *Rationalism*, 94.

[50] Andrew Linklater, *Ibid.*

[51] James E. Dougherty & Robert L. Pfaltzgraff jn., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey* New York: Longman, 2001, 168.

[52] Gilpin in: Mastanduno, Michael, *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies after the Cold War*, New York: Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1999, 20.

viewed as inherently pugnacious, is egoistic at its core, and leads to immorality and conflict in international affairs. Morgenthau, for example, observed, "the conflict-ridden international arena" is the consequence of "forces inherent in human nature" and that "the animus dominandi" or a natural will to power characterises human beings. Machiavelli expresses human nature as "insatiable, arrogant, crafty, and shifting, and above else malignant, iniquitous, violent, and savage".[53] In the early twentieth century, Niebuhr in his Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932) has greatly influenced the realist movement and main realist writers, such as Morgenthau and E.H Carr. Niebuhr took the original sin as the explanation for an evil human nature. In his eyes, "the ultimate sources of social conflicts and injustice are to be found in the ignorance and selfishness of men".[54]

Change, from the realist perspective, can, thus, either be cyclical or stagnant, whereas from the liberal viewpoint, it follows a unilinear evolution towards progress, whether this is ethical or material.[55] Moreover, realists uphold that since relations between states are sustained by order, a balance aimed at preventing war between nations should prevail, whilst liberals see the necessity of a system of collective security in order to sustain peace. Realists rely, firstly, on clearly defined units represented by states, which are at the centre of their political theory, and secondly, on the notion of sovereignty, which "defines what the state is".[56] With the emergence of new actors, realists recognise that the nation-state is not the only actor on the international scene, but nevertheless, hold that it is the most important one. Indeed, this view is found in the words of neo-realist, Stephen Krasner (1976): "In recent years, students of International Relations have multinationalized, transnationalized, bureaucratized and transgovernmentalized the state until it has virtually ceased to exist as an analytic construct. This perspective is at best profoundly misleading".[57] Neo-realists such as Waltz regard states as the "unitary actors with a single motive – the wish to survive".[58] This point is also stressed by Griffith "Realism conjures up a grim image of international politics. Within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, politics is an activity of potential moral progress … Beyond the exclusionary borders of sovereign presence, politics is essentially the realm of survival rather than progress"[59] – a view that denies the cosmopolitan contention that the international realm does not have to be characterised by recurrence, fixity, conflict, and power politics.

---

[53] Machiavelli in: Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations,* 23
[54] *Ibid.,* 48
[55] Lucian M. Ashworth, *Creating International Studies: Angell, Mitrany and the Liberal Tradition*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 16.
[56] Barry Buzan, *Anticipating the Future*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1998, 388.
[57] Stephen Krasner, in: Michael Mastanduno, *Unipolar Politics*, 21
[58] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations,* 52.
[59] Martin Griffith, *Realism, Idealism, and International Politics: A Reinterpretation,* London: New York: Routlege, 1992, p. ix.

It is often put forward that realists see the world as it is and 'idealists' as it should be. It can also be argued that realists only rely on the present, whilst 'idealists' wish to change the latter. In this way, realism seems to be 'stuck' with present events. Furthermore, with the demise of the Cold War, realism has lost its appeal. It is a theory functioning within defined limits: it is taken aback by the occurrence of sudden and unexpected events. Theory should, however, seek to predict and find solutions to the world's problems, rather than lay down a set of negative facts about the reality of human nature, and the presumed ensuing impasse in which world politics finds itself. Indeed, if this were so, there would not be much point writing about International Relations theory as the only contemplation would be the image of a gloomy world doomed to remain static. Realism focuses on present facts, rather than on their development over time, as testified by its attachment to the nation-state system. Accordingly, it focuses on temporality, rather than evolution. Booth states, "the realist tendency to privilege the short term can lead to a kind of myopia in which broader problems are not detected until it is too late to do anything about them".[60] Miller also shares the view that "it is wrong to assume that the only reality is that which presents itself for today or tomorrow."[61] Recently, cosmopolitanism underlines that the conservative nature of realism has neglected the logic of change, the existence of plural actors in world politics, and has been an obstacle to the creation of an alternative world order.[62]

Cosmopolitanism and Current IR Theory

In the last two decades or so, IR has taken on a new turn, a 'post-positivist' turn, no longer centred upon a state-centric theory, namely that of realism, and allowing for the (re-) emergence of normative International Relations theory, which emphasises the potential transformation of the world through criticism of power politics. This has propelled IR theory into a 'new' perspective, and opened the way for alternative views that are no longer regarded as unfounded, but instead as an enrichment of IR. The rationale underlying theoretical inquiry is no longer solely problem-solving (safeguarding the status quo by legitimising power relations), but more critical (having the imaginative potential to anticipate alternative models of world order). The last two decades or so have seen a clear rejection of positivist assumptions and a return to the normative side of the discipline (how the world ought to be), founded after WWI upon liberal internationalism or 'idealism'. It is held that the IR theorist can no longer be totally detached from the object of enquiry (feminists call this 'embedded knowledge'), and that theory helps construct the world, and is not outside of it (constitutive theory). Robert Cox notes, in this context, that theory often

---

[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid*. p.9
[62] Scott Burchill, *Realism and Neo-Realism*, 90.

'precedes and shapes reality' indicating that theorists cannot stand outside the political and social world they examine.[63]

Cosmopolitanism, as a normative approach, can be found in different forms in many theories in normative IR. It can be liberal, critical, feminist, green, or even postmodern. However, what is certain is that it cannot be realist. Political liberalism is "a universalist doctrine and so is committed to some notion of a universal community of mankind which transcends identification with and membership of the nation-state community" it "has faith in the capacity of human beings to solve seemingly intractable problems through collective action".[64] Cosmopolitanism is enshrined in contemporary liberalism as "liberals have offered a conception of community and identity which spans the entire planet".[65] Its normativity surpasses liberal internationalism, however. It can be found in critical theories, and in some aspects of postmodernism.

Critical theory argues that counter-hegemonic forces challenge prevailing institutional and political arrangements. These counter-hegemonic values are transnational in nature and based on "an alternative set of values, concepts and concerns, coming from organisations like Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Greenpeace".[66] Postmodernists also reinvent International Relations along a new ethics with 'others'. This postmodern cosmopolitanism, as it is here argued, is based on a new 'solidarity with others'. "Postmodernists want to rethink the basis... for notions of morality and ethics, so that they are sensitive and responsive to differences".[67] The label 'critical' is sometimes referred to as feminist, postmodernist and critical international theories, and the term 'critical' shall be employed in this sense in this paper, in other words, as a body of thought in IR which questions the fixity of the prevalent order. This body of thought, thus, intends to 'denaturalise' notions of strangeness and territoriality, which have become increasingly familiar. As Seyla Benhabib observes, "The dogmatism of knowledge is shown to be the dogmatism of a way of life".[68]

The days when realism reigned supreme over IR have drawn to a close. Cosmopolitan approaches are increasingly gaining ground, as together they make a strong case for the validity and contemporary necessity of cosmopolitanism. They highlight growing interactions that strip borders and exclusive political communities of any sound coherence and meaning that they might have enjoyed in the past.

---

[63] Scott Burchill, "Introduction", in: S. Burchill, & A. Linklater, (eds.), *Theories*, 1st ed., 2.

[64] Jill Steans & Lloyd Pettiford, *International Relations: Perspectives and Themes*, Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2001, 54.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Seyla Benhabib, in: Richard Devetak, "Critical Theory", 161.

The Bahá'í Faith as a Cosmopolitan Model

The Bahá'í Faith and Bahá'í cosmopolitan thinking originate from Asia, most particularly nineteenth century Persia, and have, as such, a non-Western origin, unlike most known cosmopolitan perspectives in IR. Heater notes, "Turning to modern times, several writings advocating a world community or a formalised world constitution were produced in Asian countries in the nineteenth century. Of the Asian texts, we may particularly cite the teachings of the Persian prophet Bahá'u'lláh (b. 1817), the originator of the Bahá'í Faith (which has also attracted many adherents in Western countries)".[69]

Indeed, cosmopolitan principles constitute the core of the Bahá'í Faith as "the universality of humankind, including the social and political oneness, are fundamental principles of the Bahá'í Faith".[70] The Bahá'í writings, no less than earlier prophetic religions, concern themselves with governance.[71] Some Bahá'í writers underline that it is a novelty that the founder of a world religion advocates global federation as a means to accomplishing world unity. "Bahá'u'lláh brought, for the first time in religious history, explicit teachings about the need for an international federation capable of harmonizing the affairs of an interdependent world and bringing about world peace".[72] This call for global governance could be explained by the global intent and character upon which the Bahá'í Faith bases its principles.

For its adherents, however, what some might call 'Bahá'í ideas' are not just the enunciation of certain principles, and the attempt at their practical realisation, nor a mere political philosophy that is relevant to cosmopolitan ideas, but rather a whole new divine revelation that answers to the social and spiritual needs of an ever interdependent humanity. In contrast to 'secular' cosmopolitan trends, the Bahá'í writings rely on a historical process that is divine in nature, hence finding several references to the intervention of 'God', (or what some political philosophers such as Kant called 'The Hidden Plan of Nature'),[73] and underline some certitudes about some aspects of the future. However, it is noteworthy that cosmopolitanism, in the Bahá'í ethos, is not just a vague appeal to human brotherhood, but contains clear guidelines on the elaboration of a system of global governance and peace in our times.[74] It is this peace programme, which at its

---

[69] Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government*, x.

[70] Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis, "Bahá'í Universalism", *Dialogue and Universalism*, Warsaw University and Polish Academy of Sciences, 1996, 6, (11-12), 17.

[71] Graham Hassall, "Contemporary Governance and Conflict Resolution: A Bahá'í Reading", January 2000

[72] Brian Lepard, "From League of Nations to World Commonwealth", in: Charles Lerche (ed.), *Emergence: Dimensions of a New World Order*, London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 72. See also Foad Katirai, *Global Governance and the Lesser Peace*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1981, 9, and Nalinie Mooten, Interview with Daniel Wheatley, conducted Via Email, 10 February 2003.

[73] Kant: in David, Hoffman, *The Renewal of Civilization*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1981, 37.

[74] "As indicated by its many social teachings, the religion of Bahá'u'lláh is not just concerned with the spiritual development of the individual. Its broad sweep includes a wide range of social principles and teachings

core revolves around the consciousness of the oneness of mankind, and which calls for more integrated global organisations, that shall be examined.

Origins of Bahá'í World Order Themes

The Bahá'í Faith is centred upon three main figures – The Báb (1819-1850), Bahá'u'lláh (1817- 1892), and 'Abdu'l'Bahá (1844-1921) – Who, for the first stage of its development guided the Bahá'í community at large. These three figures are not just the leaders of the Faith: for its members, the Báb is a herald-prophet, who along with bringing a whole new message to nineteenth century Iran (the religion He founded is referred to as the Bábí Faith) ushered in the start of a new religious cycle and announced the arrival of the founder-prophet of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh appointed His son 'Abdu'l'Bahá to guide the community after His passing.[75] The writings of these three figures constitute the Bahá'í sacred scriptures, as Hindus look to the Vedas and Bhagavad-Gita, Christians look to the Bible, or Muslims to the Koran. Interestingly, and in accord with their beliefs, Bahá'ís consider the aforementioned Holy Scriptures, along with those of the main religions, to be divine in origin, hence refusing to think of their Faith in superior and different terms, but just as a further element in the revelation of the divine process.[76] Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh enjoins all to "Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship".[77] As Udo Schaefer notes, "Such a belief necessarily results in the rejection of excluvism whereby one religion is regarded as the sole bringer of salvation…The reconciliation of religions is a major goal of Heilsgeschichte (salvation), because it is the foundation of 'world wide reconciliation' called for by Bahá'u'lláh, and which is the prerequisite for lasting world peace".[78]

'Abdu'l'Bahá designated His grandson Shoghi Effendi Rabbaní as the interpreter of the writings, and five years after Shoghi Effendi's passing away in 1957, the Universal House of Justice, the first international permanent institution of the Bahá'í Faith, came into being. This event signalled the start of a new governance system within the Bahá'í community that was no longer based on a single figure. Along with the sacred scriptures of the Faith, the writings and statements of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice constitute the official guidelines and literature of the Faith. 'Abdu'l'Bahá interpreted and clarified the writings of

---

that aim to carry forward humanity's collective life on the planet" (Moojan, Momen, *The Bahá'í Faith: A Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999, 63).

[75] Whilst the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are regarded as 'Messengers of God', 'Abdu'l'Bahá, in the eyes of Bahá'ís, is a perfect exemplar of their teachings.

[76] See Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 119.

[77] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, 95. This and other statements have inspired the Bahá'í International Community to be pro-active in the Inter-Faith dialogue.

[78] Udo Schaefer, "Bahá'u'lláh's Unity Paradigm: A Contribution to Interfaith Dialogue on a Global Ethic", *Dialogue and Universalism*, 1996, 6 (11-12), 27-28.

Bahá'u'lláh, and Shoghi Effendi further elucidated the principles of world order that rests on the firm foundation of the oneness of humankind. Shoghi Effendi gave this principle considerable attention during his 'mandate' as Head of the Bahá'í Faith from the time of his designation as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in 1921 to his passing away in 1957.[79]

Bahá'u'lláh's message of world order and peace is mainly expressed in a series of letters sent to the world secular and religious leaders.[80] Most of the statements of 'Abdu'l'Bahá were pronounced during His travels to Europe and Northern America between August 1911 and June 1913. During this journey, 'Abdu'l'Bahá 'warned of an imminent world war and the forces of social dislocation that such a conflict would unleash and elaborated Bahá'u'lláh's principles of global concord'.[81] The writings of Shoghi Effendi on the matter are enfolded in a series of letters entitled the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh written between 1929 and 1936. Indeed, the theme of world order, which he clarifies and expands upon, represents the bulk of his works.

More recently, world order themes are enclosed in the statements of the Universal House of Justice and those of the Bahá'í International Community (BIC). The history of the statements provided by the BIC goes back to the participation of the Bahá'í community with international organisation bodies: the Bahá'í Faith is an active member of the United Nations in the form of the Bahá'í International Community that was registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation in 1948. The involvement of the Bahá'í community with international organisations does not, however, start at this particular point in time, but in 1926, when at the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva an International Bureau was established to serve in League activities. The BIC represents the Bahá'í Worldwide Community, and, as an NGO, is an association of democratically elected national representative bodies called 'National Spiritual Assemblies'. Subsequently, the Bahá'í International Community gained consultative status with **ECOSOC**, **UNICEF**, and **UNIFEM**, has working relations with the **WHO**, and has worked closely with the **UNEP**, the **UNHCR**, **UNESCO**, and the **UNDP**.[82] Among the main goals and activities of the BIC we can find the areas of grassroots participation in sustainable development; advancing the status of women; the education of children; developing a consciousness of world citizenship; the prevention of drug abuse; the elimination of racism; and the promotion of human rights education.[83] The BIC statements that deal with the Bahá'í view of world order reflect the teachings of the sacred

---

[79] 'Abdu'l'Bahá said, "In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His law is the consciousness of the oneness of mankind". Bahá'í World Centre Commissioned by the Universal House of Justice, *Century of Light*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2001, 49) "It was this vision, for the 36 years of the Guardianship that provided the organising force of Shoghi Effendi's work". (*Ibid.*)

[80] Peter Khan, "Introduction", in: *Peace More Than an End to War*, p. xii.

[81] *Ibid.,* p. xii. Both the statements of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l'Bahá relating to world order themes are complemented by other writings They produced.

[82] Bahá'í International Community, "History of Active Cooperation with the United Nations", 2002,

[83] *Ibid.*

scriptures, and propose both a theoretical and practical foundations on which to base the Bahá'í ethos of international organisation.

A System of Planetary Organisation

The fundamental conviction in the organic oneness and unity of the diversified elements of humanity is the basis of the belief-system found in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the Bahá'í Faith, and supports its corollary teachings. The requirement of the delineation of a new socio-political system to work along the lines of this assertion is not only a moral corollary, but also a timely and adjusting necessity. For Bahá'ís, this explains that what they believe to be the new divinely sent message has clear universal ramifications and a global intent.[84] Bahá'ís maintain that Bahá'u'lláh's starting Revelation in the mid-nineteenth century (1863) and His arrival in this point of history are consistent with a trend of unification and globalisation of world structures that demand corresponding governing bodies.[85]

Because the Bahá'í Faith is of a religious nature, the intervention of God in history is a given: following the belief in the organic unity of mankind, God sends 'Messengers' according to the needs of the times, and whilst the 'spiritual' message (such as the development of human virtues) does not alter, the social content of each Messenger evolves consistent with the needs and requirements of the time.[86] According to this statement, we encounter one of the main tenets of the Faith, namely the belief that there is only one religion, which is revealed from age to age, and whose social content must be adapted to the evolving and changing nature of society.[87] This new vision of religion is explained by Shoghi Effendi in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, "religious truth is not absolute but relative … Divine Revelation is progressive, not final".[88] Here we discern a belief in a directional purpose in history: history is not left to itself or to haphazard events, and although the idea of change is paramount ('Abdu'l'Bahá for example stated that, "creation is the expression of motion" or "that old ideas and modes of thoughts were fast becoming obsolete")[89] the latter does not necessarily follow smooth patterns. "Bahá'ís anticipate that the coming of age of humanity and the emergence of world order will be achieved in evolutionary stages replete with strife and chaos".[90] The Bahá'í model of

---

[84] The Universal House of Justice writes, "Bahá'u'lláh's principal mission in appearing at this time in history is the realisation of the oneness of mankind and the establishment of peace among the nations…" (The Universal House of Justice, Letter: Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace, 19th of April 2001, Internal Document).

[85] The first permanent organisations that cut across national boundaries, such as the International Telegraphic Union and the Universal Postal Union, appeared subsequently in 1865 and 1874.

[86] Bahá'u'lláh, in this regard, stated, "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements". (Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 213).

[87] Bahá'ís call this phenomenon 'progressive revelation'.

[88] Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 58.

[89] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, 140.

[90] Janet Khan, "New Vision, New Values: The Emergence of A New World Order", Dialogue and Universalism, 1996, 6 (11-12), 82

history, hence, simultaneously follows a cyclical and evolutionary content: humanity is on an ever-progressive line composed of cyclical trends of rise and fall leading to its ultimate global unity in all human spheres.[91]

According to the BIC, "Bahá'u'lláh asserts an opposing interpretation of the historical process" with its evolution operating similar to the different stages in the life of an individual, passing through the various stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and maturity.[92] The present stage of human evolution is now amenable to the acceptance of the permanent principle of the oneness of humanity, and its practical realisation in institutional terms, which will ultimately lead to the unification of mankind. Indeed, the Bahá'í Faith identifies global unity as the essential goal of human history.[93] Shoghi Effendi explains that the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, "…stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution".[94] As Laszlo and the BIC explain, "…disunity (stands) as a prelude to, and not as a contradiction of unity":[95] "The wars, exploitation, and prejudice that have marked immature stages in the process should not be a cause of despair but a stimulus to assuming the responsibilities of a collective maturity".[96] The tumultuous world condition is regarded as:

"A natural phase in the organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race, as a distinct organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age."[97]

Hence, for Bahá'ís, the unification of the world does not constitute a utopian goal to be striven for but not to be achieved, or a 'matter of choice'; rather, it represents the next inescapable stage in the social evolution of mankind,

---

[91] "Bahá'ís see human life as evolutionary and perceive the rise and fall of civilizations as part of an evolutionary progression from family and tribes to city-states and nations". (Peter Khan, "Introduction", p. xi) This view of rise and fall leading upward also appears in Toynbee's view of history. Toynbee notes "The single, finite movement from a disturbance to a restoration of equilibrium, is not enough if genesis is to be followed by growth... there must be an élan which carries the challenged party through equilibrium into an overbalance which exposes him to make a fresh challenge and thereby inspires him to make a fresh response in the form of a further equilibrium ending in a further overbalance – and so in a progression which is potentially infinite". (Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (Vol. I), London: Oxford University Press, 1935, 128)

[92] Bahá'í International Community, "Who is Writing the Future", February 1999, . See also Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 164).

[93] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance*, p. 13.

[94] Shoghi Effendi, in: *The Bahá'í World* (Vol. III), *Appreciations of the Bahá'í Faith*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1941, 5.

[95] Ervin Laszlo, "Science and Prophecy", *Dialogue and Universalism*, 1996, Vol. 6 (11-12), 91.

[96] Bahá'í International Community, *Who is Writing the Future?*

[97] The Universal House of Justice, "The Promise of World Peace", in: National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Peace: More Than An End To War: Selections From The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Adbu'l'Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice (Compilation)*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1986, 5

however unpersuasive contemporary world events appear to be.[98] Alongside the trend towards maturity lies the underlying concept that the system of human organisation has evolved from family, tribe, city-state, and the nation.[99] The conflicts that plague humankind can be compared to the various crises in adolescence that are necessary to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. Refusing to accept the implications of a new stage of planetary organisation can, thus, only lead to drawbacks and crises that belong to a precedent stage of human evolution, namely that of a world structure based on the nation-state. In this respect, Janet Khan observes:

> "Associated with this changing reality (increasing interdependence of a now global society) there is a growing recognition that present day values, worldviews, and administrative structures that were functional and adaptive in the age of self-sufficiency and unfettered national sovereignty, are proving inadequate to meet the challenges posed by the new stage of human history that is emerging."[100]

The Bahá'í cosmopolitan ethos is also grounded in the belief that the international community should intervene in the affairs of a state, namely in the case of gross human rights violations. The Bahá'í World Centre cites, for example, the breakthrough made in international law following the occurrence of WWII, and the trial of Nazi leaders for crimes committed against humanity. This meant, according to Bahá'í thought, that "the fetish of national sovereignty had its limits".[101] This acknowledgement explains the favour with which the Bahá'í community welcomes the creation of the ICC.[102] Moreover, this can justify that the Bahá'í community could approve of, and lend its support to the idea of a global federation that endorses macro-policing actions against governments that threaten to commit genocide against their own peoples.[103] Charles Lerche describes the Bahá'í model of human rights as a cosmopolitan model, as the human being stands at the centre of IR, and not at its margins. The BIC, furthermore, observes that, "since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a trust of the whole".[104]

In this regard, as testified by the example of human rights, the nation-state merely constitutes a transitional stage in the development of humanity, and has to be transcended by a more encompassing political entity. The state

---

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] Shoghi Effendi explains the concept of a trend toward global unity as follows: "Unification of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation building has come to an end". (*Ibid.,* p. 202)

[100] Janet Khan, *New Vision, New Values*, p. 77.

[101] Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* p. 73.

[102] The call raised by the international community to establish the ICC is clearly one that responds to Bahá'í expectations for the fulfilment of greater justice. (The Universal House of Justice, Letter: *Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace.*)

[103] Nalinie Mooten, Interview with Daniel Wheatley, Conducted Via Email, 10 February 2003.

[104] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point for All Nations*, (New York: United Nations Office, 1995), p. 4.

cannot be the highest authority in globalised conditions. Its destiny is merely "to build the bridge from local autonomy to world unity".[105] In this regard, Shoghi Effendi wrote that, "Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving to a climax".[106] Furthermore, emphasis in Bahá'í thought is not placed solely on states or leadership, but on peoples. The principle of collective trusteeship demands that the diverse cultures of the peoples of the world, which are essential to their identity, be protected under a system of national and international law.[107] In 1947, the BIC underlined this crucial point, "Both state and people are needed to serve the strong pillar supporting the new institutions reflecting the full and final expression of human relationships in an ordered society".[108]

If Bahá'ís believe that the unification of mankind is the next stage of its evolution, they do not believe that it will be an easy undertaking, nor that it will occur without hindrances. Although there is recognition of a trend towards global unity, there is similar recognition that barriers 'stand in the way of its achievement.'[109] Such barriers include: the numerous prejudices based on gender, class, race, nation, religion; 'degree of material civilization; the lack of educational opportunities and communication among peoples';[110] civil conflicts, global terrorism, and other destructive processes that do not have any positive effects on the development of society at all levels. The idea that simultaneous negative and positive forces are at work constitutes an integral part of the Bahá'í belief in a dual process intended to bring about world unity. Indeed, the hindrances to global unity are identified by Bahá'ís as 'disruptive forces', and those that have a positive influence on global processes are identified as 'integrative forces'. This dual phenomenon is part of a process that implicates the confusion now prevailing in human affairs. Indeed, this process calls for visions of world unity that Bahá'ís believe are constructive in nature, and it also reposes on opposing forces, which refuse to move beyond national sentiments.

Shoghi Effendi referred to "simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other".[111] The Universal House of Justice notes that the disintegration process can be identified with the numerous religious, political, racial or tribal conflicts taking place in several parts of the globe; the sudden collapse of civil order that has paralysed several countries;

---

[105] Bahá'í International Community, in: Charles Lerche, "Justice as a Theme in The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, in: Charles Lerche, (ed.), *Toward the Most Great Justice: Elements of Justice in the New World Order*, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 9.

[106] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* p. 202.

[107] Bahá'í International Community, in: Charles Lerche, (ed.), *Toward the Most Great Justice,* p. 10.

[108] *Ibid.,* p. 9

[109] Janet Khan, "New Vision, New Values", p. 82.

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 72.

religious fundamentalism;[112] the epidemic of terrorism as a political weapon; and among other great disasters, the surge of criminal networks.[113] Among integrative forces we can find, for example, the call raised in favour of an International Criminal Court; world conferences;[114] the realisation that nations are interconnected in the world of trade and finance (a condition that Shoghi Effendi identified as necessary for the development of an organic unified world); and related global aspects that call for a more efficient system of global governance. These two forces, as described by Shoghi Effendi, although clearly opposed in nature, will inevitably lead to the "unity of the human race and the peace of mankind".[115] In the face of this dual process, peace, Bahá'ís believe, will emerge in stages, and will be characterised by a growing consciousness of world citizenship.[116]

The great differentiation of the Bahá'í Faith is also to be encountered in the statement about the reality of human nature that Bahá'u'lláh claimed is fundamentally spiritual. 'Spiritual' in this sense does not literally mean 'religious', as we would usually think of the term, but is akin to the formulation of a 'global ethic', morality in human affairs, and 'human values' in the field of global politics. Schaefer identifies that without "a world ethos, without a minimal consensus concerning durable values, irrevocable standards and fundamental moral attitudes, it is impossible to imagine a 'new global order', as envisaged and so urgently enjoined upon by Bahá'u'lláh in the nineteenth century".[117] The presence of ethics[118] is congruent with the idea of a divine polity being reflected in temporal affairs, and more importantly, it denotes that the relation between the two spheres is a practical one, and not a vague description of a world that is out of reach. 'Abdu'l'Bahá states, "The spiritual world is like unto the phenomenal world. They are the exact counterparts of each other. Whatever objects appear in the world of existence are the outer pictures of the world of heaven".[119] 'Abdu'l'Bahá mentions that heavenly attributes can be compared to the solidarity of mankind or the perfection of justice.[120] The characteristics of this divine polity are, thus, the reflection of high requirements in the governing of human and international affairs, which accounts for the

---

[112] The Universal House of Justice contemplates that the surge of religious fanaticism testifies to the break up of human values, which were brought by religions themselves. (See The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace,* 8).

[113] The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan message, April 2000, internal document.

[114] Among others, the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, the UN Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and subsequently in 1993 and 1995, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, or the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] The House of Justice notes that the concept of world citizenship has emerged as a direct result of the 'contraction of the world into a single neighbourhood through scientific advances and of the indispensable interdependence of nations'. (The Universal House of Justice, "The Promise of World Peace", 13).

[117] Udo Schaefer, *Bahá'u'lláh's Unity Paradigm*, p. 30.

[118] "It is now the time in the history of the world for us to strive and give an impetus to the advancement and development of inner forces – that is to say, we must arise to service in the world of morality…" ('Abdu'l'Bahá, in *Peace: More Than An End To War*, 235.)

[119] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 10.

[120] *Ibid.,* p. 8.

reference of 'spirituality' in the Bahá'í writings. There is, for example, a reflection of what is physical reality (the global interdependence of nations), and what Bahá'ís consider to be the spiritual reality of the oneness of humankind (the brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings).[121]

The BIC writes of the nature of the body of thought of Bahá'u'lláh: The mainspring of Bahá'u'lláh's message is an exposition of reality as fundamentally spiritual in nature, and of the laws that govern that reality's operation. It not only sees the individual as a spiritual being, a "rational soul", but also insists that the entire enterprise that we call civilization is itself a spiritual process, one in which the human mind and heart have created progressively more complex and efficient means to express their inherent moral and intellectual capacities.[122]

For Bahá'ís, laying the foundations of a global society that reflects the oneness of humanity is a 'central spiritual issue' facing all the various peoples of the world.[123] In brief, the manner in which the foundations of a system of global governance are established, depends, to a certain degree, on infusing a moral sense in its socio-economic and political structures.

Bahá'u'lláh's Exhortation to Political Peace: Framework of the Bahá'í Vision of World Order

The cosmopolitan trait of the Bahá'í Faith starts with the words of the Báb,[124] Who along with proclaiming the concept of progressive revelation,[125] wrote that, "We have created you from a tree and have caused you to be as the leaves and fruits of the same tree, that haply ye may become a source of comfort to another…It behooveth you to be one indivisible people".[126] The analogy of the 'tree' representing humankind, and the diverse nations and peoples being the 'leaves and fruits' are later re-echoed in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh: "Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship…"[127] 'Abdu'l'Bahá also used images found in nature to elucidate the idea of the oneness of humankind, as it is depicted in the Bahá'í image. This is tantamount to stating that the world of nature does not differ from the 'reality' of the oneness of humankind in the human world. Alluding to the great tree of the human family, 'Abdu'l'Bahá states, "For mankind may be likened to the branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruits of that

---

[121] Moojan Momen, *The Bahá'í Faith,* p. 63.
[122] Bahá'í International Community, *Who is Writing the Future?*
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] French Historian Nicholas described His writings as "powerful and enlightened liberalism". (John Huddleston, *The Earth is but One Country*, Leicester: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 141).
[125] Comparing the sun to the divine revelations, The Báb wrote, "the process of the rise and setting of the Sun of truth, will thus, indefinitely continue- a process that had no beginning, and will have no end". (The Báb, in: The Universal House of Justice, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976, 87).
[126] *Ibid.* p.129
[127] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 288.

tree". [128] He also explains that this image corresponds to the solidarity of the human race.

W. Kenneth Christian notes that, "The chief principle of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is 'the oneness and wholeness of the human race.' This is the pivotal point of all that He taught… To achieve the unity of the human race was Bahá'u'lláh's compelling life purpose".[129] Indeed, such a statement is confirmed by 'Abdu'l'Bahá ("The basis of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the unity of mankind")[130], Shoghi Effendi[131] and by the statements of Bahá'u'lláh himself. "Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self… It is incumbent upon every man, in this Day, to hold fast unto whatsoever will promote the interests, and exalt the station, of all nations and just governments".[132] Bahá'u'lláh's message aims at the creation of a universal society between nations, the abolition of war, and the foundation of universal peace.[133] "Love for humanity is a central value in the hierarchy of values. All actions should be directed towards the well-being of humankind, its welfare having absolute priority over all particular interests".[134] Likewise, Janet A. Khan notes that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are intended to encourage 'global unity and world order'.[135]

In line with the conception of a world vision, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of 'just' governments, a concept which was elucidated in the various letters that He sent to the major monarchs,[136] rulers, and religious leaders between 1867 and 1873. These statements represent His advice to the temporal and religious leaderships. In the Súriy-I Mulúk (Tablets to the Kings), He addresses all of the monarchs, as He calls on them to abide by the principles of justice and unity, to disarm, to move away from tyranny and oppression, to care for the poor and downtrodden, and describes the accumulation of riches from the peoples by sovereigns as 'grievous injustice'. 'Peoples' are to be a crucial concern of the leadership. Bahá'u'lláh states in the Súriy-i-Mulúk: "Do not lay burden on your subjects…The poor are the trust of God in your midst, safeguard the rights of the downtrodden".[137]

The Universal House of Justice says of the Súriy-i-Mulúk:

---

[128] 'Abdul'Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 16.

[129] W. Kenneth Christian, "Introduction", in: *Ibid.,* p. xi.

[130] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks*, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 36.

[131] Shoghi Effendi identifies the oneness of humankind as "the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve." (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 42).

[132] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 95.

[133] Udo Schaefer, *Bahá'u'lláh's Unity Paradigm*, 24.

[134] *Ibid.*

[135] Janet Khan, *New Vision, New Values*, p. 79.

[136] Although there is a high station in the Bahá'í writings regarding 'kingship', the latter is endorsed if fulfilling several conditions, including the rejection of absolute monarchy, and the endorsement of a republican form of government. (See Ulrich Gollmer, "Bahá'í Political Thought", in Udo Schaefer, (ed.), *Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Bahá'í Apologetics*, (trans, Geraldine Schukelt) (Oxford: George Ronald, 2000), 449-450).

[137] The Universal House of Justice, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), 36-37.

> "It introduces some of the great themes that were to figure prominently in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh over the next two and a half decades: the obligation of …civil authority to institute the reign of justice, the necessity for the reduction of armaments and the resolution of conflicts among nations, and an end to the excessive expenditures that were impoverishing these rulers' subjects."[138]

The idea of morality in human affairs is underlined, as well as the notion that temporal government must reflect divine virtues (such as showing justice, and discarding oppression and tyranny) in the management of their affairs and the treatment of the peoples.[139] In the address to Queen Victoria, Bahá'u'lláh praises the Queen for abandoning the practice of slavery on both men and women, and also for abiding by the formulation of a democratic tenet in her government – a point that 'Abdu'l'Bahá was to emphasise in His treatise The Secret of Divine Civilization in 1875.[140] Bahá'u'lláh further expounds the principles that constitute the first stage of world peace for Bahá'ís, the Lesser Peace, a political peace among the nations of the world with a reference to the principle of collective security that He was among the first to expound and elaborate on.[141] He writes, "Be united, O kings of the earth… Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice".[142] Bahá'u'lláh also enjoins leaders to 'take counsel together' in a convened international gathering, to show concern for the whole of mankind, and to reflect upon the design of a world political community. He also calls for the reduction of armaments to the extent that they will only be required for internal or self-defence purposes.[143] Bahá'u'lláh stated, "O Rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions".[144]

Referring to the contents of these Tablets, Shoghi Effendi explains, "the application of the highest principles in human and international relations are forcibly and insistently made, and the abandonment of discreditable practices and conventions, detrimental to the happiness, the growth, the

---

[138] *Ibid.* p.iv

[139] The link between divine and temporal leaderships, in the Bahá'í Faith, relates to the belief that temporal leadership must reflect moral (divine) virtues. "A just king is the shadow of God on earth". Bahá'u'lláh (Súrih-i-Haykal) in: *Ibid.,* 112).

[140] "It would be preferable if the election of non-permanent members of consultative assemblies in sovereign states should be dependent on the will and choice of the people. ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 24.)

[141] Bahá'u'lláh was also among the first to evoke the phrase 'New World Order': "…the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective… Soon will the present-day order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead". (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 7 & 216).

[142] *Ibid.,* p. 43.

[143] Bahá'u'lláh, in: The Universal House of Justice, *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, 90 & 93 and *Gleanings,* 249.

[144] Súrih-i-Haykal, *Summons of the Lords of Hosts,* 93.

prosperity and the unity of the human race, enjoined".[145] The system of collective security propounded by Bahá'u'lláh asserts that political agreements alone are not sufficient to support it.[146] It must stand on a stronger moral consciousness of human values, and in particular, must be grounded in the oneness of mankind. Bahá'u'lláh's counsels to the leaders of His time, which represent the kernel of His exhortation to the Lesser Peace, are at the heart of Bahá'í views on global governance, and constitute the basis of further elaborations provided by His successors and by the BIC.[147]

The Century of Light

The vision of a system of international interdependence, and the need for interlocking governance underlined by the oneness of humankind have also been expounded by 'Abdu'l'Bahá, Who advocated that a sine qua non condition for universal peace was universal suffrage, and Who elucidated the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.[148] Of religious, racial, patriotic, or political prejudices, He said that they were the destroyer of the body politic inasmuch as all people have a single and common origin.[149] More interestingly, 'Abdu'l'Bahá called the twentieth century 'the century of light', and records of His statements that international peace would indeed occur in this century were reported in various papers of the early twentieth century.[150] This pronouncement has been sometimes mistaken as being congruent with Him stating that the Lesser Peace in the twentieth century would be a reality. Nonetheless, when 'Abdu'l'Bahá called the twentieth century 'the century of light', or when he referred to the twentieth century as the century of international peace, He alluded to a process of peace that started in the twentieth century, and not to events that took place during that time.

It is fascinating to see that He denoted the potentialities of the twentieth century as containing the embryo and the impetus for the creation of international peace, and the creation of corresponding pending global institutions and outlook. The BIC notes, "The attainment of peace in the political realm is discernible through the workings of a process that can be seen as having been definitely established in the twentieth century amid the terror and turmoil that have characterised so much of this period". [151] The twentieth century had unleashed the capacity for international peace and a

---

[145] Bahá'u'lláh, in: *Ibid,*. 72.

[146] "…the abolition of war is not simply a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace. Based on political agreements alone, the idea of collective security if a chimera". (The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 14).

[147] This vision of a system of collective security shall be later expounded when looking at the writings of Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice, and the Bahá'í International Community.

[148] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 134.

[149] *Ibid.* 124.

[150] For example the Montreal Daily Star in 1912.

[151] Bahá'í International Community, *Peace Among the Nations*, London: Bahá'í Information Office, 1999, 1.

global era. In 'Abdu'l'Bahá's words, "Inasmuch as this is the century of light, capacity for achieving international peace has been assured".[152] The Bahá'í World Centre explains that this image refers to the growing "acceptance of the principle of oneness and its implications" and that "the physical unification in our time and the awakening aspirations of the mass of its inhabitants have at last produced the **conditions that permit achievement of the ideal**, although in a manner far different from that imagined by imperial dreamers of the past". [Emphasis added][153] It is relevant to see that the twentieth century has witnessed a breakthrough in international thinking, as it has witnessed the birth of 'representative global institutions, including the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies.'[154] 'Abdu'l'Bahá declared that the 'unity of nations' would happen in the twentieth century, meaning that the peoples of the world would have developed a certain consciousness of world solidarity, essential to the establishment of a political union.[155] The Universal House of Justice clarifies that "the unity of nations can be taken as that unity which arises from a recognition among the peoples of the various nations, that they are members of one single family".[156] One of the core teachings of 'Abdu'l'Bahá is that the oneness of humankind stands as the primary principle regulating human life and reality; the main difference is that its realisation is now at hand due to the progress in technology, transport, and communication. As 'Abdu'l'Bahá states:

"In this day, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the world have merged into one… In like manners all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent… Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved."[157]

'Abdu'l'Bahá further reflected the writings of His father as He called for altruistic concerns and the welfare of humanity as a whole, rather than particularistic ones.[158] He also clearly defined cosmopolitanism, as it is enshrined in Bahá'í thinking, stating that some wars are "caused by purely imaginary racial differences; for humanity is one kind, one race and progeny habiting the same globe...These boundaries and distinctions are human and artificial, not natural and original". Furthermore, He asserts, "This earth is one home and native land. God has created mankind with equal endowment and right to live upon the earth. As a city is the home of all its inhabitants although each may have his individual place of residence therein, so the

---

[152] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 121.
[153] Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* 9 & 91
[154] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 48.
[155] The Universal House of Justice, Letter: *Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace.*
[156] *Ibid.*
[157] Abdu'l-Bahá, in: Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* 7.
[158] "… May all your attentions centre in the welfare of humanity…" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 54).

earth's surface is one wide native land or home" for everyone.[159] There is an argument in 'Abdu'l'Bahá's writings for the grounding of a spiritual, physical, and intellectual cosmopolitanism. There is the allusion that all human beings were created by one 'Great Being', as part of a spiritual bond between human beings, a spiritual cosmopolitanism: "racial assumptions and distinctions are nothing but superstition…All mankind are the children of one Father";[160] the intellectual explanation that there is no biological difference between human beings and that we are all part of the same human species, "we are one physical race, even as we are of one physical plan of material body',[161] and the intellectual grounding that physical borders are simply artificially created boundaries, and not a natural state of affairs, "Racial prejudice or separation into nations… is unnatural and proceeds from human motive and ...ignorance".[162] 'Abdu'l'Bahá also mentioned the organic evolution of humanity that is enshrined in all the fields of human science, including politics. He states, "The world of politics is like the world of man; he is seed at first, and then passes by the degrees of the condition of embryo and foetus… the political world in the same way cannot instantaneously evolve from the nadir of defectiveness to the zenith of perfection".[163] Accordingly, the idea that the political realm must pass through different degrees before it can be functional is here alluded to; likewise, an appropriate system of global governance will gradually evolve to become increasingly efficient.

Human Nature and Peaceful World Order: An Alternative Image

According to 'Abdu'l'Bahá, the aim of the creation of men and women, who have been given the endowment of the intellect and understanding, is not targeted at destruction, but rather constitutes a means by which a peaceful society can emerge.[164] He stated, "I hope that you will use your understanding to promote the unity and tranquillity of mankind…"[165] Bahá'í belief dwells on the fact that "men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization".[166] The purpose in creating humankind is, thus, the achievement of its full potential to do good, and to promote the evolution of society.[167] In this statement, we come across the premise of the Bahá'í idea of human nature, which is not imprisoned in the narrow confines of being inherently either 'good or evil', but constitutes an image that asks for endeavour and accounts for the free will of human beings. For Bahá'u'lláh, each individual represents a 'supreme talisman' and a 'mine

---

[159] *Ibid.,* 118 & 287.
[160] *Ibid.,* 299 & 468.
[161] *Ibid.,* 299.
[162] *Ibid.,* 287.
[163] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization,* 107.
[164] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 33.
[165] *Ibid.,* 42.
[166] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 214.
[167] "The purpose of the creation of man is the attainment of the supreme virtues of humanity …the purpose of man's creation is, therefore, unity and harmony, not discord and separateness". ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 4).

rich in gems of inestimable value.' This potential must be developed through proper education, with which each person can optimise the ability to practice 'free will'.[168] Individuals are not left to themselves with a fixed nature.

'Abdu'l'Bahá calls these two sides of human nature the 'lower' and 'higher' natures.[169] This image of human nature can also be captured in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, "Noble have I (God) created Thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou was created".[170] Human beings have to 'endeavour' to let their 'higher nature' dominate: human nature is, thus, a matter of choice. By acting on their lower nature, human beings allow disasters in civilisation, which occur on the grounds that the purpose of creation is not being fulfilled, or that the nobility intended for creation is being ignored. Human reality is that of the 'higher nature'. The Bahá'í concept of human nature portrays, thus, a positive, rather than a negative, image. The complexity of human nature is explained by 'Abdu'l'Bahá:[171] "Man is the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality − that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection… Not in any of the species in the world of existence is there such a difference, contrast, contradiction, and opposition as in the species of man".[172] In parallel, it is important to make the paramount point that in the Bahá'í image, lower nature is not real, as it is not part of human reality. Evil is the absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light, and in this way, it is crucial to state that the 'lower nature' constitutes an absence of the 'higher nature'.[173] The creation of humankind is reminiscent of a higher nature, leaving no doubt as to the nobility of creation. Gollmer explains:

"The Bahá'í Faith does not have a dualistic image of the world with distinction between believers and infidels,[174] good or evil, saved or unsaved. Its principle is that of unity: metaphysically as the unity of God, the Creator of all human beings and his universal mercy; practically as an ethical standard in all dealings with the people and nations of the world and as a responsibility for the preservation of creation."[175]

Since the capacity for a higher nature does exist, and the attainment of this higher nature is the aim of creation, Loni Bramson-Lerche remarks, "With

---

[168] Loni Bramson-Lerche, "An Analysis", p. 4. "The reality underlying this question is that the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man". ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968, 77).

[169] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks,* 55.

[170] Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* − Part I from the Arabic, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 9.

[171] Bahá'u'lláh quotes the Koran when He states, "Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery". (*Peace: More Than End To War*, 227).

[172] 'Abdu'l'Bahá in: *Peace: More Than An End To War*, 38-39.

[173] "Evil is non-existent; it is the absence of good; sickness is the loss of health; poverty the lack of riches". ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity,* 78).

[174] 'Abdu'l'Bahá states, "Let us never say, 'I am a believer and he is an infidel". ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks,* 152).

[175] Ulrich Gollmer, *Bahá'í Political Thought,* 443.

regard to the capacity for aggression, the Bahá'í teachings differ sharply from the opinions of the 'realist' school of political science".[176] Hence, this certainly explains why the Bahá'í literature on the subject is often defined as 'utopian', when in fact it claims that human beings were created for a nobler purpose than that of unceasing conflict. Danesh Hossein describes the Bahá'í model of world order as one that asserts the "fundamental nobility of every human being and the ultimate victory of the human spirit".[177] The possibility of achieving a peaceful society is also justified by the fact that the individual is a 'social being' in need of 'cooperation and association'.[178] It is noteworthy that the capacities for building a peaceful society are greater in our age than they were in previous ages, leading us back to 'Abdu'l'Bahá's reference to the twentieth century as 'the century of light".[179] Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh notes that our age is the day "… in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest". [180]

The Universal House of Justice maintains that a 'paralysis of will' and 'a paralysing contradiction' have prevailed in human affairs due to the inherent belief in the aggressiveness of human beings. Accordingly, the Universal House of Justice asserts that this has generated self-imposed obstacles to the creation of a just and peaceful social system. The international Bahá'í body recognises, on the one hand, the longing of people for peace and the 'apprehensions tormenting their daily lives', and on the other hand, it challenges the conflicting statement that human beings are inherently selfish and aggressive and incapable of achieving a peaceful and dynamic social order.[181] The need to reassess mankind's true nature is, thus, crucial when thinking of the possibilities that exist within the international community to achieve a more peaceful order. The Promise of World Peace states:

"As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction which hinders its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit. Satisfaction on this point will enable people to set in motion constructive social forces which, because they are consistent with human nature, will encourage harmony and cooperation instead of war and aggression."[182]

---

[176] Loni Bramson-Lerche, *An Analysis*, 4.
[177] Hossein B. Danesh, *Unity: The Creative Foundation of Peace*, Toronto: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1986, 118.
[178] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 35.
[179] Similarly, Toynbee views the point of a civilisation's decline as the point at which a rejuvenating 'higher religion' emerges.
[180] Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh: Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, 219.
[181] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 5.
[182] *Ibid.*

This statement can be linked to the Bahá'í belief that humankind passes through different stages leading to world unity, one of which is an immature stage replete with war, strife, and exploitation.[183] The paralysis of will 'rooted in a deep-seated conviction in the quarrelsome of mankind' has hindered world leaders to move beyond the notion of national sovereignty, and meet the challenge of establishing an appropriate world institutions and world mechanisms for the achievement of peace.[184] Henceforth, in the Bahá'í model, all efforts that aim at relieving some of the world's problems cannot be solely pragmatic; they have to be raised to the level of principle. In this regard, the Universal House of Justice states, "the primary challenge in dealing with issues of peace is to raise the context to the level of principle, as distinct from pure pragmatism. For, in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a spiritual or moral attitude, it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of peace can be found…"[185] This inner attitude grounded in the view that human beings are and were created to be noble, stand at the basis of the Bahá'í image of human nature, and the centrality of the individual and human relationships in a multilayered governance scheme. It, furthermore, disposes of the idea that world order schemes can be founded on political concerns only, without any reference to evoking the moral attitude that lies at the basis of the true reality of man.

The Oneness of Humankind and Institutional Cosmopolitanism

Shoghi Effendi wrote that, "…the principle of the Oneness of Mankind, the cornerstone of Bahá'u'lláh's…dominion implies nothing more nor less than the enforcement of His scheme for world unification".[186] The oneness of humankind, which entails its unity, has its corollary in the socio-economic and political spheres: it propounds that unity is the principle regulating all spheres of human life, including the socio-political realm. As such, the principle is not fated to remain only on ideological and emotional levels, with no institutional and practical implications. If it were the case, the principle would remain on the level of theoretical good wishing.[187] Shoghi Effendi further explained that unless the efforts of world leaders were directed towards giving thought to this system of global governance that was now based on global, rather than national structures, they were bound to encounter setbacks. Shoghi Effendi states:

> "The oneness of mankind…is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of

---

[183] See also Kant, "Idea For A Universal History With A Cosmopolitan Purpose", in: Hans Reiss, *Kant: Political Writings*, 44.

[184] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 11

[185] *Ibid*., 14-15.

[186] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 36.

[187] 'Abdu'l'Bahá stated, "What profit is there in agreeing that universal friendship is good, and talking of the solidarity of the human race as an ideal?" 'Abdu'l'Bahá further explained that unless these principles were transformed into the world of action, they would be of no use. ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks,* 3).

one family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal,
but stands inseparably associated with an institution…adequate
to…demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. **It implies
an organic change in the structure of present day society…** it
constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn
shibboleths of national creeds – creeds that have had their day…It
calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarisation of
the whole civilised world…" [Emphasis added][188]

Although it implies the need for unity, the oneness of humankind does not
suggest that uniformity is a relevant consideration in its application. On the
contrary, the machinery that can best incarnate this principle must be made
to reflect the diversity inherent in the human family, and in all the aspects of
human life. The Bahá'í Faith is a firm believer in the oneness of humanity, if
only sustained by a strong corollary of the preservation and flourishing of
diversity. Not only the diversity found in the different shapes and colours of
the human family, but also the diversity of thought and opinion. In this
instance, 'Abdu'l'Bahá noted, "All are seeking truth, and there are many
roads leading thereto…Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of
thought to separate you from your fellow men".[189] The principle of 'unity of
diversity', which stands at the basis of the Bahá'í Faith as an inherent
element of the oneness of humankind, does not simply constitute a
theoretical and ethical aspect; it constitutes, for Bahá'ís, a gift of beauty to
mankind, which has been misused for hatred and conflict.[190]

Indeed, the oneness of humankind and unity in diversity, which stand at the
very heart of the principles that have shaped the whole process of life are,
thus, not just to be applied to the individual, but to the governance system,
and have to be the guiding thrust behind the machinery that can best serve
the interests of humankind in its structural aspects. It is significant that, in
this instance, the Bahá'í Faith upholds the principle of federalism, or that of
the commonwealth,[191] when considering a new system of global
governance.[192] The BIC, therefore, underlines, "…one of the time-tested
models of governance that may accommodate the world's diversity within a
unified framework is the federal system". The BIC further observes,
"Federalism has proved effective in decentralizing authority and decision-
making in large, complex, and heterogeneous states, while maintaining a

---

[188] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 43.
[189] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks,* 44-45.
[190] See 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith,* 295.
[191] The commonwealth model takes a more confederal form than the federal model. The federal model
has a rule of law, which operates from the federal centre, whereas the commonwealth model can issue sanctions
when, for example, human rights are not respected. The commonwealth/confederation model has no legal force
over member-states.
[192] Tellingly many grass-roots socio-economic development programmes have proved very efficacious
without the need for a central authority to control them, which demonstrates that a governance model certainly
does not have to resemble a Hobbesian style government. (Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 13).

degree of **overall unity and stability**.[193] Another model worth examining is the commonwealth, which at the global level would place the interest of the whole ahead of the interest of any individual nation".[194] [Emphasis added].

Moreover, these systems of governance were promoted by 'Abdu'l'Bahá, who emphasised in 1912 that centralisation was most likely to encourage despotism and that it was, thus, urgent to find ways to discourage its practice as a system of governance.[195] Here, 'Abdu'l'Bahá's recommendation was further elaborated by Shoghi Effendi. Explicitly, when providing one of the possible examples of 'some form of political unity', as enshrined in the Bahá'í writings, Shoghi Effendi mentioned a 'World Federal State', whilst he acknowledged that its realisation was most likely to be tortuous and induced by sufferings.[196] He, furthermore, explained that 'the establishment of a world commonwealth, a world federal system liberated from… war… in which Force is made the servant of Justice' was the consequential institutional form of the unity of mankind.[197]

Shoghi Effendi, as early as 1954, described the world as a global neighbourhood ('needs of a world already contracted into a neighbourhood') when advocating the option of a world federal government to counteract 'anachronistic conceptions' or the 'obsolescent doctrine of absolute sovereignty'.[198] Indeed, world federalist thinking advocated world federal government, especially in the inter-war years and after WWII, to do away with the outdatedness, and the ill foundation of state sovereignty.[199] In Bahá'í thought, this world federal government devoid of 'anachronistic conceptions' would be a major step towards the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the unification of mankind.[200] The main organs of the world federal government would comprise a world parliament or legislature that is able to create a code of enforceable international law previously universally agreed upon; a world executive, backed by an international force, which would 'carry out the decisions arrived at and apply the laws enacted by the world parliament'; and a world tribunal, whose decisions and judgment would be binding on the parties and applicable to all disputes arising in the universal system. Alongside these main organs of the world federal

---

[193] Here the use of the term 'overall' is interesting. Many federal states encounter internal separatist movements. (See Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, Canada: Penguin, 1993, 172-3).

[194] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, p. 7.

[195] "…to cast aside centralisation which promotes despotism is the exigency of the time". ('Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 167.) It is here helpful to state that global federalism has been influenced by the transformation of the United States at the end of the eighteenth century from a confederal to a federal model. The latter initiated the idea of the individual as a subject of world law.

[196] Shoghi Effendi, in: Helen Bassett Hornby (Compiled by), *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994, 130.

[197] *Ibid.,* 436.

[198] Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1999, 126.

[199] Advocates of a world federal government included: Auguste Forel, Auguste Schvan, and Paul Otlet (during the First World War), Bertrand Russell and Oscar Newfang, Rosika Schwimmer, Maverick Lloyd (in the inter war years). During the Second World War, federal advocates consisted of Ransome, Beveridge, Zilliacus, Culberston and Adler. (Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government*, p. 110-112).

[200] Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 126.

government, a number of umbrella organisations, including 'a complex transnational network of individuals, private organisations and international agencies' functioning with autonomy.[201] (Significantly, the BIC defines the global governance system as a sum of intricate relationships between individuals and groups who determine how they manage common international concerns, underlining the importance of the input of the global citizenry).[202] This institutional form provides the possible format that can embody the words of Bahá'u'lláh, frequently cited as the 'motto' of the Bahá'í Faith, 'The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.'[203]

Significantly, Shoghi Effendi was not proscriptive when he advocated federalism or the commonwealth as two possible models of world governance, but it is relevant that the BIC reiterated, as soon as 1995, that federalism was a useful structure for some form of global government. In this regard, according to Bahá'í thought, while bearing in mind that federalism is considered the most favourable form for the management of diversity and decentralisation in a global governance system, it is reminiscent that this vision of a world federal government, although a clear destiny in the Bahá'í vision of a future global order, does represent a long-term and drastic project as things now stand.[204] The Bahá'í model calls for incremental steps to be taken in order to reform international institutions, and move towards a new system of global governance. Accordingly, it contains a transformationist paradigm:[205] the nation-state is in a period of change, and will eventually cede some of its influence to world political arrangements. Changes in the political arena will not happen unexpectedly and incoherently, but as a result of expediency and urgency following both the will of peoples and world leaders. The new generation of world federalists has adopted a step-by-step approach, rather than the maximalist approach of the realisation of a world federal government: for example, they advocate UN democratisation through an assembly of world citizens, or have worked for the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

The Lesser Peace, or Bahá'í Programme for a Political Unity of Nations

Bahá'ís believe that peace will come in stages, the first of which concerns a political peace among nations: the 'Lesser Peace'. The Lesser Peace relates to what 'Abdu'l'Bahá named 'unity in the political realm', and is explained by Shoghi Effendi as a 'unity which politically independent and sovereign states achieve among themselves.[206] The second stage, the 'Most Great Peace', refers to the social, spiritual, and political unification of mankind, a

---

[201] *Ibid.* 94.
[202] Daniel Wheatley, "Global Governance: Has a Paradigm Shift in World Government Theory Brought The Lesser Peace Closer?" in: Babak Bahador & Nazila Ghanea, (eds.), *Processes of The Lesser Peace*, (Oxford: George Ronald, 2002), 244.
[203] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 250.
[204] Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* 91-92
[205] Daniel Wheatley, *Global Governance: Has a Paradigm Shift*, 237.
[206] Shoghi Effendi, in: Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* 128.

peace in which spirit and humanity would be infused into the political peace. Daniel Wheatley notes:

"The Bahá'í writings show our self-perception and identity as being one of the major areas of difference between the Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace. It is only in the Most Great Peace when a man shall travel to any city on earth, and it will be as if entering his own home. The Lesser Peace will see the end of war between nations…but it will not necessarily be accompanied by feelings of universal humanity…"[207]

The political peace, the most immediate peace,[208] has been mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh when He wrote to the rulers, kings, and religious leaders of His age, and was further expounded by 'Abdu'l'Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. The formulation of a world government based on a federal system of governance and decentralisation is crucial to the Bahá'í model of governance, as it seeks to maintain decision-making at appropriate levels, and functions according to the principle of subsidiarity. The latter represents an element of the 'Lesser Peace', the term Bahá'u'lláh used when elaborating on the concept of collective security.[209] Wheatley details:

"As well as calling for disarmament,[210] Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l'Bahá and Shoghi Effendi laid down guiding principles for a global legislature, international weights and measures, a supreme tribunal, a global peacekeeping force…Shoghi Effendi expands upon the practical necessities of the Lesser Peace. This includes the creation of a global executive, a global legislature, an international armed force in crisis management, a world taxation system, a global currency, global communications networks[211] and a supreme international tribunal…'Abdu'l'Bahá also speaks of the organisation necessary … in terms of a 'Parliament of Man' and a 'Supreme Tribunal'."[212]

The Supreme Tribunal was also defined by 'Abdu'l'Bahá as a 'Highest Court of Appeal', an 'International Tribunal', the 'Great Council', or an 'International World Conference'.[213] This tribunal, which would have abiding jurisdiction in international affairs only, would need to be set up so as to prevent war, and would be composed of representatives from each

---

[207] Nalinie Mooten, Interview with Daniel Wheatley, Conducted Via Email, 10 February 2003.

[208] The Most Great Peace refers to a very distant future, as it is part of an eschatological promise.

[209] The occurrence of a World Federal Government is, according to the BIC, 'the inevitable destiny of humankind', but it does, however, 'represents a long-term picture of a global society". (Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 6).

[210] 'Abdu'l'Bahá held the view that it was essential that disarmament, which was so crucial to the development of international peace, happened simultaneously, as partial disarmament would only cause other nations to be suspicious and increase their armaments as a result. (In: The Universal House of Justice, *Peace,* 20).

[211] Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1936, "A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity". (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 203).

[212] This vision is alluded to in the statements of the Bahá'í International Community, namely in *Turning Point For All Nations*. See also J. Tyson, *World Peace and World Government: A Bahá'í Approach.* Oxford: George Ronald, 1986, 57 & Daniel Wheatley, *Global Governance: Has a Paradigm Shift,* 229.

[213] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, in: *Peace: More than an End to War,* pp. 199-203.

nation of the world, whose election would be based on using some form of population criteria. This election would need to be confirmed by the cabinet, the upper house, and the president of the nation, and should have at its basis the sanction of the peoples of the world. 'Abdu'l'Bahá made the following suggestion as to a future world court in the late nineteenth century:

"A Supreme Tribunal shall be established by the peoples and governments of every nation, composed of members elected from each country and government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character should be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war."[214]

This vision of a world judicial system is part of Shoghi Effendi's elaboration of the Bahá'í vision of a future world order. Shoghi Effendi explains that the statement of Bahá'u'lláh regarding His elaboration of collective security are none other than the demand for 'the curtailment of unfettered national sovereignty' and that of a system of a world commonwealth of the nations of the world or the formulation of a system of world government, whose main organs have been above mentioned.[215] Shoghi Effendi details his thoughts, reminiscent of the call for a 'World Federal State':

"Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community…in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship – such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh…"[216]

It is to bear in mind, however, and as briefly mentioned, that this picture of world order represents in the words of the BIC, and of the Bahá'í World Centre, 'a long-term picture of a global society' and a '**radical**

---

[214] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 161.

[215] "We see you adding every year unto your expenditures and laying the burden thereof on the people whom ye rule; this verily is naught but grievous injustice.... Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need armaments no more save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions…Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice". (Bahá'u'lláh, in: Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 40).

[216] *Ibid.,* 40-41.

restructuring of the administration of the affairs of the planet'. [Emphasis added][217] In IR, the use of the very term 'world government' can seem far-fetched, outdated, and out of touch with a plural global governance system advocated in the new conditions of world (dis)order. To some, a 'world government' already exists in the form of unilateralism in international politics and/or the deficit of global democratic input in financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (**IMF**). To others, 'world government' implies the prevalence of political security issues over socio-economic ones. It is essential to stress that the Bahá'í approach differs from those conceptions of world government. Indeed, we can anticipate why the Bahá'í model, which is holistic and based on grassroots values, calls for the principle of 'subsidiarity' and 'decentralisation' in international affairs. Indeed, with centralisation, or the process by which decisions are taken away from those affected by them, people lose their ability to shape their own destiny, and are deprived of the dignity to choose for themselves.

We can discern that the problem with the phrase 'world government' can be one of terminology (i.e. the world government that Bahá'ís believe in does not take the form and rigidity of the world government that is being currently criticised in IR). Indeed, the 'world government' referred to by the Bahá'í writings is not a centralised, undemocratic, and ineffective governance machine. Rather, it is a pyramidal structure, which respects lower levels of governance. In parallel, the BIC promotes the view that in development paradigms, the maxims 'small is beautiful' and 'think globally, act locally' are adequate to tackle economic issues[218] as people feel that they can control their destiny. Here sovereignty, meaning the respect for lower levels of governance, is necessary. As late Professor Claude Ake observes "sovereignty has done little to prevent the majority of countries in the global south being subject to policies **imposed** on them by global financial institutions."[219] [Emphasis added] Indeed, cosmopolitanism does not necessarily equate to the idea of 'bigness' and inefficiency. As Indian writer Arundhati Roy states, "The further and further away geographically decisions are taken, the more scope you have for incredible injustice."[220]

Geoffrey Robertson, in view of the growing importance of global corporations as global actors, contends that it is imperative that international legal mechanisms be created for states and multinationals 'to provide resources, which are available to them … for basic rights of health, education and social security.'[221] More significantly, he maintains that 'human rights auditing', i.e. the process by which ethical reports are

---

217 Bahá'í International Community, Turning Point For All Nations, p. 6 and Bahá'í World Centre, p. 91.

218 Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point for All Nations*, 24.

219 Ake in: Charles Lerche, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 256.

220 Arundhati Roy, *The Chequebook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy* (interview by David Barsamian), London: Harper Perennial, 2004, 15.

221 Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity*, 522

produced on behalf of multinationals, should become human rights principles, and not merely 'a public relations exercise'.[222] Shoghi Effendi, who referred to a world parliament as a global law making body, conceived it in cosmopolitan terms, insofar as it would intend to 'satisfy the needs' of all peoples.[223] The second and third generation of human rights define these socio-economic needs as rights. In relation to the latter, David Held also alludes to the idea of a global parliament which would monitor the accountability of global corporations to deal with their social failures. The ICC, which does not as yet include corporate responsibility, has, however, started meaningful and innovative work in implementing human rights on non-state actors, i.e. on human beings.

There is no doubt, for Bahá'ís, that the elaboration of a system of world government is a radical undertaking as things now stand. More importantly, this system of world government would not come into being without the approbation of the members of the human race, who would have developed a strong sense of world citizenship that would have replaced 'a militant nationalism'. In highlighting these aspects, Shoghi Effendi, in 1931, made it absolutely clear that the intentions latent in the words of Bahá'u'lláh do not aspire to replace the existing local or national structures by international ones, nor to substitute our existing loyalties for other ones, but rather seek to supplement humanity with the international structures and loyalties that are necessary to the flourishing and development of society. Similar to the federalist tradition, the Bahá'í ethos does not intend to replace lower levels of governance and lesser loyalties, but rather seek to complement them with the requirements of an interdependent world. It does not call for a vague attachment to the world as a whole, but for evolving and multiple loyalties from the grassroots to the whole. Shoghi Effendi notes:

"Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it (the meaning of Bahá'u'lláh's intent) seeks to broaden its basis…with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided… It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralisation on the one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity."[224]

The Bahá'í call is based on the belief that it is absolutely necessary to abandon theories that seek to 'deify the state', that are only materialistic in

---

222 Ibid.
223 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 203.
224 Ibid., 41.

their aspects,[225] that promote the interests of certain members of the human race to the disadvantage of others, and that do not attempt to adjust themselves to the needs of an increasingly cosmopolitan age. Accordingly, the Universal House of Justice writes:

"…all too many…ideologies, alas, instead of embracing the concept of the oneness of mankind, and promoting the increase of concord among different peoples, have tended to **deify the state**, to subordinate the rest of mankind to one nation, race or class, to attempt to suppress all discussion and interchange of ideas, or to callously abandon starving millions to the operations of a market system that all too clearly is aggravating the plight of the majority of mankind, while enabling small sections to live in a condition of affluence scarcely dreamed of by our forebears." [Emphasis added][226]

There is no denial that one of the most firm calls launched by the Bahá'í community is the abandonment of theories and ideas that are standing in the way of the realisation of humankind as one body, that are viewing all of humankind as an interdependent family, and that are still insisting upon nationalistic and divisive claims. It is suggested that we abandon parochial notions, such as racism, which in its extreme can lead to genocide, or nationalism, that has persisted and demonstrated its pernicious effects on the body of humankind. If racism or nationalism cannot generate the prosperity of humankind, it is here suggested that we now start shaping our institutions, our efforts, and our world-view on a more encompassing and humane dimension. Shoghi Effendi embodied this all-important statement in his writings:

"The call of Bahá'u'lláh is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine."[227]

Unity, Diversity and Continuity

---

[225] The Universal House of Justice highlights the link between purely materialistic doctrines and the belief in the inner aggressiveness of man: "Most particularly, it is in the glorification of material pursuits at once the progenitor and common feature of all such ideologies, that we find the roots which nourish the falsehood that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive". (The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 9).

[226] *Ibid.* 8-9.

[227] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 42.

It is crucial to state that Bahá'í appeals, which promote a federal structure and decentralisation, only call for additional structures to global governance, and do not advocate the abolition of the nation-state system, as they view governance in an evolutionary, and not adversarial base.[228] In this light, Katirai observes, "While systems founded on an adversarial base may regard compromise as essential because two positions are mutually exclusive, those founded upon an evolutionary base see each stage as a precursor to the next higher and more complex one."[229]

The Bahá'i Faith, thus, presents the image of a transformationalist, and not hyperglobalist model, which signifies that it recognises that the nation-state is in a period of transition, and not about to be extinct. The Bahá'í stance in relation to global governance is clearly between the insinuations of hyperglobalizers, who affirm that the nation-state is going to disappear due to transnational processes and the global economy,[230] and between statist statements, which put forward that the nation-state is not going to be even slightly challenged by the processes of globalisation.[231] Moreover, the Bahá'í Faith highlights the idea of a 'turning point' in international affairs, or a transition between national sovereignty and world unity, which many international theorists recognise.[232] The proponents of cosmopolitan democracy, likewise, although not advocating a federal solution, admit that the fate of the nation-state is outside of its hands. Heater notes, "The political scientists who have devised the concept of cosmopolitan democracy and those of like mind are sometimes dubbed 'transformationalists… they reject the interpretation of the 'hyperglobalists' who foresee the trend of globalization as involving the complete collapse of the nation-state". [233]

Shoghi Effendi did not hesitate to point out the anachronism of the nation-state, as he clearly contended that the leaders of human institutions "…in utter disregard of the spirit of the age, are striving to adjust to national processes, suited to the ancient days of self-contained nations…"[234]More recently, Peter Drucker argues that the nation-state is no longer the self contained unit that it used to be in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, for Drucker, the obsolescence of the nation-state demands the creation of institutions, which would "overlap national boundaries and serve transnational social and economic needs".[235] Toulmin argues that the new age is characterised by adaptability and diversification instead of the old age

---

[228] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 23.

[229] *Ibid*

[230] See for example, Keichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State.* London: Harper Collins, 1995.

[231] Hirst and Thompson think that the processes of globalisation have not perturbed sovereign nationhood to the slightest. (See Daniel Wheatley, *Global Governance, Has A Paradigm Shift*, 236).

[232] See Lazslo, Toulmin, Held or Rosenau.

[233] Derek Heater, *World Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Thinking,* 152.

[234] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 36.

[235] Stephen Toulmin*, Cosmopolis*, 7.

of stability and hierarchy. The nation-state is currently unable to respond to our needs, and should be complemented by more global institutions. "… We are learning that in an evolving world, institutions must be adaptable to deal with evolving human problems".[236] Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed that the era of the unity of nation had given way to the era of the unity of the world. Indeed, for Bahá'ís, the times surrounding each religious dispensation are distinguished by a particular theme, the current one being the unity of humankind. In the evolutionary religious context with which the Bahá'í Faith views all aspects of human life, including social and political aspects, Shoghi Effendi explains that the main theme surrounding the Christian era was that of the individual, and that the era of Islam had been marked by the thematic of the unity of the nations.[237]

Due to the nature of its evolutionary and non-adversarial approach, the Bahá'í Faith recognises that the continued evolution of Christianity and Islam (which does not mean that their messages are questioned; rather it highlights an intrinsic link between religions) signifies that the adoption of a world vision complements individual and national concerns. The present religious theme, thus, is characterised by world unity, as the era of the self-sufficiency of nation-states has come to an end. Bahá'u'lláh refers to the love of one's country as still being a valid, yet insufficient and outdated, notion. He said, "It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the whole world."[238] While Bahá'ís do advocate 'a universal way of life',[239] universal institutions, and the consciousness of world citizenship, they do not seek to diminish sane patriotic feelings, and the love that one individual may have for his or her culture, language, traditions, provided they do not become more important than wider, more global, concerns. U Thant, Secretary General of the UN from 1962 to 1971, embodied this image as he stated, "I do not criticize national pride. National pride is natural. I say only that the sense of belonging to the human community must be added to, and become dominant over other allegiances".[240] The Bahá'í image of world order is grounded in a holistic, rather than partial world-view, and takes its main insight from the principle that what is of benefit to the whole is of benefit to the part, as humankind is viewed as 'one organically whole entity'.[241] From this principle stems the consequential ideas of continuity, unity, and complementarity. The love of one's country is contained in the love of the world as the whole, continuity depicts different stages from the part to the whole (from the family unit to the world), and all of the parts are contained and act interdependently in this greater whole.

---

[236] *Ibid.,* 192.
[237] See Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come,* 196.
[238] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 95.
[239] In 1955, Shoghi Effendi enjoined Bahá'ís to "achieve a universal consciousness and a universal way of life". (in: Jan T. Jasion, "The Universalism of the Bahá'í As Reflected In the Writings of Shoghi Effendi", *Dialogue and Universalism*, 1996, 6 (11-12), 105).
[240] In: Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 15.
[241] Moojan Momen, *The Bahá'í Faith,* 63.

The Bahá'í vision contains some convictions about the future of humankind, due to its intrinsic religious character; namely Bahá'u'lláh envisions the inevitability of world peace, but warns that this phase will not come unhindered. Bahá'ís are confident, despite all of the world turbulences – which they consider to be a transitional step from a system of national sovereignty to a world commonwealth of nations – that peoples of vision and insight will lead humanity to world peace.[242] In its 1985 statement, The Promise of World Peace, the Universal House of Justice explains that flaws in the international system are partly due to the fact that state sovereignty has remained intact, and that this status quo impedes the adoption of relevant solutions to the threatened collapse of the international economic system, the spread of international anarchy and terrorism, or the inability of sovereign nation-states to prevent war.[243] This report proclaims that due to 'unfettered national sovereignty', and the attachment to old patterns of behaviour, the path to world peace could be possibly horrifying. The statement reads, "Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behaviour, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth".[244] Furthermore, the House of Justice promotes the idea that 'love of humanity' does not leave out 'love of one's country', and that 'unbridled nationalism', which distinguishes itself from 'a sane patriotism', must be superseded by a love for humanity in general.[245] Shoghi Effendi explains that all that the call raised by Bahá'u'lláh implies and proclaims, is:

"The insufficiency of patriotism, in view of the fundamental changes effected in the economic life of society and the interdependence of the nations, and as the consequence of the contraction of the world, through the revolution in the means of transportation and communication –conditions that did not and could not exist either in the days of Jesus Christ or of Muhammad. It calls for a wider loyalty, which should not, and indeed does not, conflict with lesser loyalties. It instils a love which, in view of its scope, must include and not exclude the love of one's own country. … It does insist, however, on the subordination of national considerations and particularistic interests to the imperative and paramount claims of humanity as a whole, inasmuch as in a world of interdependent nations and peoples the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole.[246]

---

[242] Peter Khan, *Introduction*, p. xi.

[243] In the words of Bahá'u'lláh, "signs of impeding convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective". (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 216).

[244] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 3. This image can be found in the writings of Kant, who thought that nature would eventually lead us to reason and peace. In the Bahá'í approach, we have a choice between reason and nature to attain peace. If not attained by 'an act of consultative will' (reason), peace will be realised by 'unimaginable horrors' (nature).

[245] *Ibid.*, p. 13. An 'unbridled' nationalism is exclusive and aggressive (defines itself against an ethnic 'other', and can lead to genocide) while a 'sane' patriotism relates to a sense of belonging to a local/national community, itself part of a wider cosmopolitan community, to which one still belongs.

[246] Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come,* 200.

'The Great Assemblage': Foundation of Global Governance and the Lesser Peace

The process of the growing consciousness of world solidarity – which, in Bahá'í thought, constitutes an element and aspect of the twentieth century – was referred to by 'Abdu'l'Bahá as 'the unity of nations'. The latter is to gradually shed its reflection in the political domain, the Lesser Peace. Indeed, Bahá'í thought maintains that the growing sense of world consciousness can be associated with certain organisational developments in the political domain.[247] The 'unity of nations' will, thus, be a crucial stage in the development of a political peace among nations. Bahá'u'lláh expounded on the Lesser Peace in the letters He sent to the major rulers of His age, and advised them to reduce their armaments, and develop a system of collective security. "O rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions...Be united... Should anyone among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against Him, for this is naught but manifest justice". In another passage, Bahá'u'lláh referred to the Lesser Peace as a gathering of world leaders, at which a system of security, unity, and concord among the nations would be devised. "The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all embracing assemblage of men will be universally realised. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will the lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace among men".[248]

Shoghi Effendi explains that, "The principle of collective security He unreservedly urges; recommends the reduction in national armaments; and proclaims as necessary and inevitable the convening of a world gathering at which the kings and rulers of the world will deliberate for the establishment of peace among the nations".[249] This call, reiterated more recently by the Universal House of Justice and the BIC, now addresses itself to the heads of nation-states, who have at this time become the highest-ranking decision-makers, as well as to the global citizenry, who participates and gives input (heard or unfortunately unheard) to these decisions.[250] The Lesser Peace will, thus, be characterised by the delineation of a global order that comprises institutions and laws to which nation-states abide, and endowed with the means with which collective decisions can be enforced, while being

---

[247] The United Nations can be regarded as one of the world organisational developments.

[248] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 249.

[249] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1999, 216-218.

[250] Bahá'u'lláh, in His time, appealed to 'kings and rulers', while more recently the Bahá'í International Community calls on the heads of nation-states to consider the convocation of a world gathering. Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 4).

substantially supported by civil society organisation and participation.[251] The Bahá'í vision only endorses a programme of global governance if it obtains a consensus from the peoples of the world, nation-states, international organisations, and NGOs, in brief all the major stakeholders.[252] This consensus is "the essential ingredient of any successful system of global governance. It is the cornerstone of the Lesser Peace and the fruits of the 'Great Assemblage' of the leaders of the nations called by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l'Bahá, wherein the foundations of a new global order and the unity of the nation-states will be laid as the Lesser Peace".[253] This consensus would be based on the global acceptance of common core values, and the establishment of a general treaty or international constitution, which would distinguish itself from old 'cosmopolitan' notions of world conquest, or universal conquests for personal and authoritarian designs, which did not have at their basis the principle of true justice, and the normative equality of peoples and nations.[254]

The call to world leaders to establish the Lesser Peace and obtain from it the sanction of the peoples of the world have been raised by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l'Bahá, the Universal House of Justice, and the Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'u'lláh called for the convocation of a 'vast all-embracing assembly'; 'Abdu'l'Bahá advocated for this assemblage to make of Peace the cause of universal consultation, underlining that it should seek to establish a union of the nations of the world and establish a binding treaty; at the present time, the Universal House of Justice highlights that this convocation is 'long overdue'. The BIC summons 'a convocation of world leaders… to consider how the international order might be redefined and restructured to meet the challenges facing the world', with significant participation and input from civil society. The BIC suggests that this summit, which they propose could be called the 'World Summit on Global Governance',[255] could draw on the experience underlying various successful UN conferences.[256] In particular, the Millennium People's Forum, held by the United Nations in May 2000 and co-chaired by the BIC, was the first of its kind in UN history to be a channel for civil society to forward discussions and ideas to the General Assembly.[257] One of the foundations of peace is that peoples would gradually come to recognise their common destiny (which is also enshrined in the principle of oneness) and would, from this premise, have the will to act together, at least in matters vital to

---

[251] More importantly, the Universal House of Justice does not believe that a system of collective security will work if only based on political agreements and protocols. The Universal House of Justice calls such as system of collective security 'a chimera': it can only work with a strong moral foundation.

[252] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance*, 2.

[253] The Lesser Peace, being the term used by Bahá'ís, to depict a political unity of nations.

[254] "During…long evolutionary process… as ever larger and more diverse populations came under the control of one or another system of government, the temptation of universal empire repeatedly seized the imaginations of the Caesars and Napoleons during such expansion". (Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light*, 91).

[255] The Commission on Global Governance also summoned such a summit, which it called a 'world conference on governance'. (Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, 351).

[256] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, p. 4.

[257] Daniel Wheatley, *Global Governance: Has a Paradigm Shift*, 245.

their concerns.[258] In the context of the Lesser Peace, an integrative process is characterised by growing global cooperation. World conferences, the creation of the League of Nations and the United Nations, the increasing number and participation of NGOs, and the strengthening of regional organisations (such as the EU) are identified as a momentum towards the Lesser Peace.

One of the outcomes of this World Summit, 'Abdu'l'Bahá specified, would be the enunciation of a treaty binding on governments. In particular, all states and nations would have to submit to a body of contract, in which clear principles of international relations and laws are laid down, and consequential agreements and obligations would be ascertained and binding.[259] (These also include, as stated, worldwide disarmament, the delineation of international borders and frontiers, the submission of disputes to binding arbitration or judgement by a world court, and a 'system of collective security to ensure that international treaties are not violated.')[260] The steps leading to the Lesser Peace, according to the Universal House of Justice, are part of this 'integrative process' articulated by Shoghi Effendi, and comprise the features that can be identified as stages towards global unity.

The various world conferences are part of this process that testifies to "an emerging unity of thought in world undertakings".[261] The 'promptitude and spontaneity with which these government leaders have been acting together in responding to a variety of world crises in different parts of the world', 'the cries...for attention to be given to the feasibility of achieving some form of global governance', 'the greater involvement of the United Nations', or 'the call raised for an international criminal court to be established' are some of the signs that Bahá'í contemplate as prerequisites for the Lesser Peace.[262] In addition, the Universal House of Justice identifies important and auspicious steps to world order which have gradually included the creation of the League of Nations, followed by the United Nations whose formation corresponded with the process of the ending of nation-building characterised by the independence of numerous nations. The Universal House of Justice also identifies their involvement with older nations in matters of mutual concern. The international body elaborates on a number of steps that have been taken towards the elaboration of world order: The consequent vast

---

[258] These values of common concern comprise the elimination of prejudices based on class, gender, race, level of economic and material development, and the right of all to an education, training, and socioeconomic development. (Ulrich Gollmer, *Bahá'í Political Thought*, 431).

[259] *Ibid.*, p. 431

[260] *Ibid.* and Brian Lepard, "From League of Nations", p. 91. Shoghi Effendi did not call for a rigid system of collective security, but for a flexible and elastic system. (See Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* p. 191) In this way, the projection of a global order, in the Bahá'í viewpoint, "…does not contain a fixed, static model… It does not present specific future events, but rather presents a vision calling to action, providing guidance for the creation of a more peaceful future…" (Ulrich Gollmer, *Bahá'í Political Thought*, 431).

[261] 'Abdu'l'Bahá also refers to 'a unity of thought in world undertakings'. The Bahá'í World Centre elucidates that this alludes to 'programmes of social and economic development, humanitarian aid and concern for protection of the environment and its oceans'. (Bahá'í World Centre, *Century of Light,* pp. 127-128).

[262] The Universal House of Justice, Letter: *Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace.*

increase in cooperation among hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples and groups in international undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an unprecedented number of international humanitarian organisations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.[263]

The House of Justice subsequently proposes that the numerous groups that have come together in the form of regional organisations to co-operate in matters of common interest, such as the Association of South East Asian Nations, the African Union, the European Union, or the international congresses that testify to an urge to unity, are reflective of this trend. Mentioning the integrative and disruptive processes, the Universal House of Justice concludes, "Together with the opposing tendency to warfare and self-aggrandizement against which it ceaselessly struggles, the drive towards world unity is one of the dominant, pervasive features of life on the planet during the closing years of the twentieth century".[264]

The Bahá'í International Community's Views on International Organisations: Precursors of Global Institutions

The BIC recognises that the world is not ready for this system of planetary government, and takes an incremental approach to the reform of the international landscape that it recognises has grown in complexity since 1945. As early as 1955, the first decade review of the UN charter, the BIC proposed some guidelines for the reform of the United Nations Organisation,[265] based on the vision articulated by Bahá'u'lláh during His lifetime. These suggestions have been endorsed by the BIC thirty years later, although further expounded and complemented – a sign that not much has changed in regards to the functioning of the UN in the last thirty years. In accordance with its evolutionary mindset, the Bahá'í International Community does not call for UN abolition, but for its reform. The Bahá'í image of world order, furthermore, recognises the transitional period delineating present times. This transition from a world based on national sovereignty to a system of global governance, set around international institutions that will develop into global institutions centred on humanity rather than nation-states, has been termed a 'turning point'.[266]

Highlighting the Bahá'í support for these organisations, the Universal House of Justice notes, "The tentative steps towards world order, especially since

---

[263] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 4.

[264] *Ibid.,* 21.

[265] Among these proposals were included the gradual removal of the veto, the references to permanent members, the elimination of the term 'enemy' in any article of the UN Charter, and the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

[266] Precisely, the Bahá'í International Community entitled its 1995 document on Global Governance 'Turning Point For All Nations'.

World War II, give hopeful signs. The increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships which enable them to co-operate in matters of mutual interests...prepare the path to world order".[267] While recognising the great achievements of the United Nations, and being active observers of the organisation of the League of Nations, Bahá'í statements seek to reform organisations that embody a world vision while still based on the dated principle of national sovereignty. The BIC accordingly notes, "Each attempt [the League of Nations and the United Nations] sought to address emergent recognition of global interdependence while preserving intact state sovereignty above else".[268] This does not signify that these organisations are not valued by the Universal House of Justice and the BIC; rather, the Bahá'í bodies contend that international organisations should become more global. Indeed, the Bahá'í International Community considers that the intricate agglomerate of institutions and relationships governing the international system, including the defunct League of Nations and the contemporary United Nations, point toward the recognition of an interdependent humanity, and a more adequate future global governance system. Per se, "Often the United Nations most avowed critics have been its most avid supporters".[269] Although the League of Nations and the United Nations are far from being perfect bodies, they represent international processes and organisations, which will eventually become more global. Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1936:

"Though the great outcry raised by post-war nationalism is growing louder and more insistent every day, the League of Nations is as yet in its embryonic state, and the storm clouds that are gathering may for a time totally eclipse its powers and obliterate its machinery, yet the direction in which the institution itself is operating is most significant. The voices that have been raised ever since its inception, the efforts that have been exerted, the work that has already been accomplished, foreshadow the triumphs which this presently constituted institution, or any other body that may supersede it, is destined to achieve."[270]

Moreover, despite all its failures, the League represented the first proper attempt by the nations to 'assume collective responsibility' and 'collective action'. Consistent with the Bahá'í proposition that there is a progression in all aspects of international relations and history in general, the League of Nations, followed by the perfected United Nations, are processes that will eventually lead to a more complete and cosmopolitan system needed for the

---

[267] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 11.
[268] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 2.
[269] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 72.
[270] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 191. 'Abdu'l'Bahá looked down upon the Versailles settlement, which to Him was only capable of bringring about an even fiercer war. Even if the League of Nations had been brought into being and represented a breakthrough in the concept of collective security, it represented the beginning of a long process of international organisations that would eventually lead to the Lesser Peace. However, it was not an effective collective body as such. (See Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 30).

organisation of the planet, namely the long-time picture of a world federal state or world commonwealth of nations based on a cosmopolitan model – where not only states, but peoples are crucial elements. Both the federal and commonwealth models represent alternative routes to world order that would be increasingly centred on humanity, rather than nation-states. According to Shoghi Effendi, the process, which launched the League of Nations, represented the attainment "to that stage at which the oneness of the whole body of nations will be made the ruling principle of international life".[271] Indeed, Bahá'ís assign a very important role to international organisations as regards their potential to participate in a new design of global governance. Lepard remarks, "…the history of international organisation has reflected a steady evolution towards higher and higher forms of unity and towards the development of a new awareness that the diverse peoples of the earth together constitute a single world community".[272] Moreover, the idea of process contains a powerful element of optimism, which considers punctual failures (such as the League of Nations or the refusal for an economic unity in Europe) as an impetus towards an improved structural form. As Shoghi Effendi wrote:

"The fierce opposition which greeted the abortive scheme of the Geneva Protocol; the ridicule poured upon the proposal of a United States of Europe which was subsequently advanced, and the failure of the general scheme for the economic unity of Europe, may appear as setbacks... And yet, are we not justified in driving fresh encouragement when we observe that the very consideration of these proposals is in itself an evidence of the steady growth in the minds and hearts of men?"[273]

We can now notice that each of these institutions has been realised, although ridiculed, and then hailed as failures.

Ethical Reforms

Part of the suggestions of the BIC relating to UN reform is based on a reconsideration of human values, and a new starting point for building a new system of global governance. The most important ethical consideration in review is the interdependent relationship existing between the individual and the international community, meaning that the individual unit is a responsibility of the world community as a whole, in which national citizenship or artificial constructed states are absolutely irrelevant. Individual human beings, who are the units that make up humanity, must be protected regardless of artificially constructed states. This is an important aspect of human rights, as these rights originate from the body of mankind as opposed to national communities that often impede their realisation. This notion can be found in Thomas Paine's words "my principles are universal.

---

[271] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[272] Brian Lepard, *From League of Nations*, 79.
[273] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 44.

My attachment is to all the world, and not any particular part".[274] Thomas C. Walker explains, "For Paine, there was a unity between the individual and mankind. Particular national attachments should carry little weight with enlightened men and women".[275] The BIC reiterates this point. Since the body of humankind is indivisible, "each member of the human race is into the world as a trust of the whole".[276] This relationship represents the foundation of human rights, and is an important consideration for reforms to be brought into the international system. Additionally, discussions about the international order must include the generality of humanity, and not only sections of people, usually leaders in all fields of human knowledge. This discussion should involve men and women at the grassroots levels, and should lead to a self-reinforcing process and growing awareness of world citizenship.[277] Finally, reforms pertaining to the United Nations, and other international institutions, can only be envisaged in the light of their future role in the international system. If criticism outweighs praise of the United Nations, it is necessary, according to the BIC, to view the United Nations, not in its present form, but with an 'evolutionary mindset' i.e. with the view of how it might operate within the future international order, and the possible achievements and benefits it might be able to provide.[278]

This cosmopolitan basis is linked to more practical measures to reform the UN body whose functioning operations have remained unchanged for the last fifty years. Indeed, Bahá'í suggested reforms are very much in line with the reforms brought by the Commission of Global Governance.[279] Among many others, a point of common venture would be the call for the adoption of new values along with the development and reform of the international system. The BIC describes the report of the Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighbourhood, as 'one of the most balanced and thoughtful' which 'argues for the widespread adoption of new values, as well as structural reforms in the United Nations system'.[280] The adoption of new values should not just be a theoretical grounding, but according to the Bahá'í viewpoint ought to be enshrined in a Bill of Rights. In 1955 the BIC stated, It is recommended that the United Nations adopt a Bill of Rights, which guarantees to every individual freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and of thought, as well as freedom from racial and religious discrimination, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, equality of

---

[274] Thomas C. Walker, *The Forgotten Prophet,* 60.

[275] *Ibid.*

[276] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 4.

[277] *Ibid.*

[278] *Ibid.* 7

[279] The BIC also mentions the early work of the lawyers Glenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, *World Peace Through World Law,* and indicates that this work represented a 'milestone', and was among the 'first solid proposals' in its early advocacy of the abolition of the veto power in the early 1950s. The BIC also quotes works such as the 'Stockholm Initiative', *Common Responsibility in the 1990s* and Benjamin Ferencz's work *New Legal Foundations for Global Survival.* (*Ibid.,* 23).

[280] *Ibid.* p. 3.

sexes, equality before the law, equality of opportunity, and other such basic rights.[281]

The Commission on Global Governance re-echoes this wish by underlining the necessity of elaborating a global Charter of civil society. "We…urge the international community to unite in support of a global ethic of common rights and shared responsibilities. In our view, such an ethic – reinforcing the fundamental rights that are already part of the fabric of international norms – would provide the moral foundation for constructing a more effective system of governance".[282] Referring to rights and responsibilities such as a secure life; equitable treatment; participation in governance at all levels; equal access to information; equal access to the global commons; the promotion of equity, including gender equity; and the preservation of humanity's cultural and intellectual heritage; the Commission goes on to state, "We believe this list of rights and responsibilities in the minimum basis for progress in building a more civil global society… Over time, we hope that these principles could be embodied in more binding international document – a global Charter of Civil Society –…"[283]

In 1947, a Bahá'í declaration on Human Rights (soon followed by a Bahá'í statement on Women's Rights) was submitted to the United Nations. After becoming an accredited NGO at the United Nations in 1948, the BIC sent a letter to former Secretary General, Mr Dag Hammarskjold in 1955, which included proposals for the revision of the UN Charter.[284] In the 1955 statement, the BIC put forward several suggestions regarding UN reform, as it highlighted that 'real sovereignty is no longer vested in the institutions of the national state because the nations have become more interdependent', …'that the existing crisis is moral and spiritual as well as political;' …'and that the existing crisis can only be surmounted by the achievement of a world order representatives of governments as well as the nations of mankind.'[285] As well as underlining the erosion of national sovereignty, and placing emphasis on moral aspects of governance, this statement joined the advocacy of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l'Bahá when They called for a more adequate representation of 'peoples' in governance, in addition to 'governments'. Both are complementary when it comes to decision-making in the international community. The basis of these considerations was to stand at the heart of practical reforms that demanded the timely readjustment of the modus operandi of the UN. In this respect, the Bahá'í International Community suggests a body of proposals relating to the operation of the main organs of the United Nations. These entail suggestions for the reforms of the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of the UN.

---

[281] Bahá'í International Community, in: Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 124.
[282] Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood,* 56.
[283] *Ibid.* 57.
[284] In: Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 67.
[285] *Ibid*

The BIC deplores the lack of cosmopolitan ingredient within the structure and functioning of international organisations. Indeed, most of these failures are due to the fact that the United Nations represents an assemblage of nation-states, which often strive to maximise their self interests. Accordingly, the BIC remarks, "The United Nations lacks not only the clear authority but also the requisite resources to act effectively in most instances. Accusations of the United Nations' failures are in fact indictments of member-states themselves".[286] Similarly, the report of the Commission on Global Governance remarks:

"When governments or people speak of reform of the United Nations, they address a process of change that has to begin in national behaviour, not on the banks of the East River in New York. National behaviour is a product of national decision-making and national policies: it is here that strengthening of the UN must begin. Worthwhile reforms of UN structures ought to be pursued, and we propose several in this report, but the greatest failings of the UN have not been structural: they have been collective failings of the member-states… The point cannot be made more emphatically."[287]

Structural Reforms: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Functions of the UN

In an earlier passage, it was noted that the Bahá'í view of history is a progressive one, namely one that passes through different stages. The collective life of humanity has, thus, been compared with the life of an individual going through childhood, adolescence, and maturity. As this view concerns the common life of humanity as a single body, it applies to international organisations, and their constant improvement. The League of Nations could, hence, be compared to the embryonic stage of the life of international institutions, and Bahá'í reforms concerning the international system are intrinsically linked to the view that evolution is a feature of human life. As such, international organisations are thought to lead to ever-closer integration in the life of humanity, founded upon the growing recognition of the oneness of humankind. The realisation of the oneness of humankind, an ethical foundation, is linked to giving more means of enforcement to the main organs of the United Nations, which are to safeguard the individual from abuse and injustice, and to advance the process of peaceful change. Bahá'ís, thus, view the improvement of the UN as a move towards the goal of human history, i.e. global unity.[288] Structural reforms are also enshrined in the belief that human nature is not inherently aggressive, that transformation is possible, and that the physical integration of humankind is a mirror of the oneness of mankind, as discussed above.

---

[286] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 7.
[287] Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, 227-228.
[288] *Ibid.*

Insofar as, in the words of 'Abdu'l'Bahá, the individual is "in need of cooperation and association",[289] his/her well-being is better served through operations which can optimise this human need, which due to the global stage in which we find ourselves, take the form of intricate global cooperation. Morality and ethics, as it was underlined, are the reflection of more global cooperative and practical efforts, reflected in the proposal for retaining independent functional organisations, which promote global integration, and international peace.

Thus, Bahá'í practical reforms keep in line with promoting a vision of unity sustained by the principle of oneness, seek to maintain and reinforce the spirit of collaboration in an interdependent and single humanity, and stress the importance of the participation of peoples in world affairs. In brief, Bahá'í practical reforms are linked to the more theoretical views of the Faith, as they seek to enhance more peaceful relations central to the vision of human integration and oneness, developed by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l'Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. It has been argued that the normative basis of the oneness of mankind is also thoroughly linked with the notion of breaking away from the concept of state sovereignty, which by underpinning the centrality of states, fails to recognise the fact of global interdependence, and limits international affairs to an outdated state-centric view. Since "the anarchy inherent in state-sovereignty is moving to a climax",[290] the United Nations must demonstrate the ability to disregard this concept. This theoretical background is reflected in the suggested reforms for the three main organs of the UN, which are the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the International Court of Justice. The reforms of the UN, as proposed by the BIC, are in line with the vision of Shoghi Effendi, when he referred to the very long-term vision of a world federal government. Namely, he mentioned that the world parliament should create binding law, that an international force should back up the world executive, and that the world tribunal should have binding decisions on the parties and on all disputes that may arise in the international system. Shoghi Effendi, furthermore, noted that the world parliament should be elected by the peoples, and that the supreme tribunal should have 'a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case into consideration'.[291] This is reflected, as we shall see in the next section, in the more incremental reforms of the three main organs of the UN.

Starting with the General Assembly, the BIC identifies its main failures with the 'undue weight to state sovereignty and a mix of anarchy and conservatism' as well as its inability to enforce sanctions.[292] It, henceforth, calls for a more representative General Assembly, indeed, one that would represent more accurately both the peoples and nations of the world. This

---

[289] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 35
[290] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* 202.
[291] *Ibid.*
[292] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 8.

call is reminiscent of the advocacy cited in the writings of 'Abdu'l'Bahá in 1875, "… it would be preferable if the election of non-permanent members of consultative assemblies … should be dependent on the will and choice of the people…"[293] Indeed, unlike people's acceptance of national and local legislative bodies, international legislative bodies are likely to entice suspicion insofar as they are not adequately represented.[294] Additionally, the resolutions of the UN should have the force of law, and be endowed with provisions and sanctions, so that they can address the needs of an increasingly interdependent humanity more efficiently, and abandon certain paralysing aspects of state sovereignty. The BIC states:

"In a reformed United Nations, the legislative branch and its voting structure will need to represent more accurately the people of the world as well as nation-states. Second, General Assembly resolutions are not binding unless they are separately ratified as a treaty by each member state. If the current system, which places state sovereignty above all other concerns, is to give way to a system which can address the interests of a single and interdependent humanity, the resolutions of the General Assembly – within a limited domain of issues – must gradually come to possess the force of law with provisions for both enforcement and sanctions. These two shortcomings are closely linked inasmuch as the majority of the world's people, suspicious and fearful of world government, are unlikely to submit to an international institution unless it is itself more genuinely representative."[295]

These reforms are suggested so as to promote the image of a single and interdependent humanity, which constitutes the more normative principles of the Faith that have been reviewed previously, and the emphasis that Bahá'u'lláh placed on 'peoples' in His recommendations on a global governance system, or the equivalent of a global civil society. For the short-term reforms of the GA, the BIC proposes five measures. Firstly, it suggests that minimum requirements should be raised and determined by the way a government conduct itself towards its peoples:

"Without an unshakeable commitment to regular and periodic elections, universal participation by secret ballot, freedom of expression, and to other such human rights, a member state stands in the way of the active and intelligent participation of the vast majority of its population in the affairs of its own communities. We propose that there should be consequences for member states violating these standards. Similarly, nations seeking recognition should be denied membership until they openly espouse these standards or make recognizable efforts to move in that direction."[296]

---

[293] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization,* 24.
[294] This also explains the suspicion shown towards the discussion, for example, of a world government.
[295] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 8.
[296] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 8.

The demands for a more democratic representation within the General Assembly, and for raising minimum requirements for membership (this would include, for example, a commitment to human rights) are regarded as foundational in the operations of the General Assembly. Violations of human rights in national systems are most certainly bound to have negative effects on the international system as a whole, as they impede on citizenry participation, which is crucial to the flourishing of international society. The Bahá'í Faith holds no dogmatic views on how population differences would be handled, as long as they are part of a fair system. What is suggested is changing the 'one state, one vote' principle of the General Assembly into 'some form of proportionate representation', which would make the General Assembly a more equal partner with the Security Council.[297] In a letter in 1942, Shoghi Effendi explained that even though 'Abdu'l'Bahá provided a clear vision of global governance, these concerned more fundamental principles than a rigid formula:

"Though it is premature to try and endeavour to foresee on what basis various nations would be represented on any international council, or in any international form of government, it is clear from the Bahá'í standpoint that it could only be carried out on the basis of true justice; and justice does not imply one race having a preponderating vote over some other race's representatives, and thus being in a position to dominate them."[298]

Other proposals relating to the legislative function include the setting up of an International Commission in order to study the question of international boundaries instead of relegating the problem to the World Court. The latter commission would serve as a study-ground and as a practical agency for the assessments of threats against various civil groups, and the results of its research would serve as a warning system for growing tensions among various groups.[299] The 1995 report of the BIC deplores the way in which nation-states were initially arbitrarily designed, a situation that has led to many conflicts, and which highlights the need for a more genuine general reassessment and agreement on national borders. "In order to establish a genuine community of nations **in the long run**, it will be necessary to settle finally all disputes among borders. This research would serve that end".[300] [Emphasis added] This measure aims at providing a short-term remedy for ethnic conflicts, as these conflicts also have to be tackled at the level of principle, that is, by promoting global values that would seek to efface hatred and exclusiveness in the very long-term. If like Mitrany, we could say that this would bring about discord, according to the Bahá'í view, this is a short-term measure (as with most proposals that relate to UN reforms) that could provide a basis upon which ethnic conflicts could be brought to

---

[297] Jeffrey Huffines, "Bahá'í Proposals", in: Babak Bahador & Nazila Ghanea, (eds.), *Processes,* 19.

[298] Shoghi Effendi, in: Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 97.

[299] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 9. This proposal is reminiscent of the call made by 'Abdu'l'Bahá to have a binding treating that would, among other things, be entitled to fix international borders in a more fitting manner.

[300] *Ibid.*

appeasement. As boundaries were mostly arbitrarily designed (the boundaries of the majority of the nations are identical with the boundaries of colonial states established by the European powers), the Bahá'í view contends that there should be an authority to settle boundary disputes adequately. It is in the light of this recognised hindrance to peace and security that the latter proposal is made. That the Bahá'í ethos does not seek to do away with groupings such as the nation-state is mirrored in this BIC proposal, and in the call for reassessing international borders for greater security, and as a preventive measure against conflicts. More importantly, there is recognition that boundaries are artificial and imagined, but since they exist, there must be short-term mechanisms to deal with them.

Anderson's observation that nations are no more than "imagined communities" that require considerable social and political engineering to propagate, echoes 'Abdu'l-Bahá's much earlier description of nations and peoples as "limited unities" which are "imaginary and without real foundation".[301] "The artificial and arbitrary nature of national boundaries, coupled with insufficient mechanisms for handling boundary disputes, has been one of the major sources of inter-national conflict in the past two centuries".[302] Indeed, the Bahá'í model rests on a long term vision, which through intermediary steps, sets to achieve a real unity among peoples. In a time of ethnic hatred, a more adequate reconfiguration of boundaries would serve as a 'warning system'. Though like Mitrany, the Bahá'í ethos seeks to render frontiers 'meaningless', it is more in a sense of feelings, attitudes, and principles. It is clear that the Bahá'í Faith does not simply base its commitment to peace on ideological commitments either. It seeks to promote an active peace, not only based on a political basis, but on the release of the powers of the individual; a new conception of human relationships; the reduction of the gap between extremes of wealth and poverty; and the promotion of sustainable development measures. More importantly, world citizenship education is viewed as a long-term preventive measure against ethnic-based conflicts.

"Consciousness of the oneness of humanity, if taught to the next generation, could protect it from ethnic and religious conflict and encourage processes of collaboration and conciliation. It could generate a desire to base decisions on just principles and lead to the development of laws that are 'universal in both character and authority'".[303]

As regards financial arrangements, which are a great impediment to the successful conduct of UN operations, the BIC underlines that voluntary arrangements would never be sufficient, and suggests that an expert task force should be established to search for new solutions. The BIC adds, "In studying alternatives, the Task Force should be mindful of several

---

[301] 'Abdu'l'Bahá spoke of the oneness of humankind and the artificiality of boundaries.
[302] Graham Hassall, *Contemporary Governance.*
[303] *Ibid.*

fundamental principles. First, there should be no assessments without representation. Second, in the interest of fairness and justice, assessments should be graduated. Third, mechanisms for encouraging voluntarily contributions should not be overlooked".[304] In addition to these proposals, the BIC, in line with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh[305] and 'Abdu'l'Bahá, calls for an Expert Commission to be appointed in order to make a commitment to "an auxiliary international language and script", whose aim would be to "facilitate the transition to a global society through better communication". Moreover, reflecting the need for greater global integration, the BIC promotes the establishment of a Commission for the development of an international currency.[306] In view of the federal mindset that the Bahá'í International Community is endowed with, and the weight it gives to the diversity of peoples and the protection of minorities, such a statement does not imply the demise of any culture or language, but rather seeks to supplement the existing world languages. This Bahá'í reform suggests that unity could be structurally realised through the input of an expert task force, which would study and seek to implement a universal auxiliary language. "Such a move", the BIC states, "would go far toward promoting a spirit of unity".[307] This is an aspect of the Bahá'í view that theory (unity) and practice (in this case the devise of a universal language) are interrelated; indeed, 'Abdu'l'Bahá spoke of treading the spiritual path with practical feet.[308]

In addition, the BIC holds the view that the Security Council "suffers from an inability to take decisive action". Hence, the BIC makes four suggestions for the short term. It proposes "as a transitionary step, measures to be introduced to curb the exercise the veto power to reflect the original intention of the Charter".[309] Other measures to strengthen the decision-making role of the Security Council and its enforcement powers include the creation of an International Force under the command of the Security Council and Secretary General financed by the General Assembly, whose personnel would come from all parts of the world. "If properly implemented, this Force would also provide a sense of security that might encourage steps towards global disarmament, thereby making possible an outright ban on all weapons of mass destruction".[310] The BIC adds, in line with the counsels of Bahá'u'lláh to the sovereigns of His time, that states should only need armaments for internal security, and for their own defence.[311] Other proposals related to the strengthening of the Security

---

[304] *Ibid.*
[305] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings,* 249-250.
[306] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 10.
[307] *Ibid,* 9
[308] Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956, 210.
[309] In this regard, the BIC states, "The original intention of the UN Charter in conferring veto power on the five Permanent Members was to prevent the Security Council from authorizing military actions against a Permanent Member or requiring the use of its forces against its will. In fact, beginning with the Cold War, the veto power has been exercised repeatedly for reasons that relate to regional or national security". (Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 11).
[310] *Ibid.*
[311] *Ibid*

Council include furthering the concept of collective security to local problems (a concept of human security), as many local threats are 'the result of the complex breakdown of the present-day global order'. "These threats include but are not limited to international drug trafficking, food security, and the emergence of new global pandemics".[312] The value of oneness touches upon the centrality of human rights, and the demand for more solid action to tear apart the concept of state sovereignty. Collective action is not only required in the case of military aggression, but also in the case of human aggression within the state (genocide), and other problems occurring as the result of the breakdown of the global system. Former Secretary General Kofi Annan observed "the collective interest is the national interest …when we read the Charter today, we are more than ever conscious that its aim is to protect human beings, not to protect those who abuse them".[313] Annan's 'Global Compact' and the emerging norm of a 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) are part of a wider global urge to usher durable changes.

In addition, if the international system is to be based on the normative principles of 'unity in diversity', the concepts of the veto and of the permanent membership in the Security Council clearly jeopardise principles of equality and fairness. The oneness of mankind also justifies that Bahá'í reforms have been suggested as early as 1955 as regards removing the veto and permanent membership in the Security Council, and the importance of democracy in international relations. Laszlo remarks that international organisations are bodies that are not truly global, but international: they still operate within the climate of state sovereignty and self interest as opposed to the global interest.[314] "Such arrangements", Katirai states, "are not just bad governance but in dire contradiction to what the Commission on Global Governance calls the 'principles of universality and the equality of member-states' that so many, including the nation-states, presume should underlie international undertakings".[315]

The BIC, as briefly noted, recognises the great importance of functional-styled executive organisations such as the WHO or UNICEF, bodies with which it closely works. Moreover, the creation of these organisations coincides with the vision of the 'century of light', as it refers to "the growing acceptance of the principle of oneness and its implications". For 'Abdu'l'Bahá, physical integration would advance "the conditions that permit achievement of the ideal" (universal peace), as these organisations are a "reflection" of the "consciousness of world solidarity", crucial to the prelude of the Lesser Peace.[316] Not only do functional organisations embody effectiveness, but they are also based on the moral need for collective action that supports the unity of mankind and the prosperity of its peoples. The

---

[312] *Ibid*
[313] In: Rod Rastan, "An International Legal"*,* in: Babak Bahador & Nazila Ghanea, (eds.), *Processes,* 206 & 208.
[314] Ervin Laszlo, *Science and Prophecy*, 99.
[315] Foad Katirai, *Global Governance,* 77.
[316] *Ibid*

BIC positively remarks, "As an international organisation, the United Nations has demonstrated humanity's capacity for united action in health, agriculture, education, environmental protection, and the welfare of children".[317] Additionally, mentioning the independent organisations in the UN family, and as part of the suggested reforms it proposed, the BIC notes that these successful executive functions (**WHO, UNICEF, The UPU, or the ILO)** should retain and reinforce their independence.[318] These proposals emphasise the functional mindset of the BIC, as they call for expert task forces to search for appreciate solutions. These functional organisations have demonstrated the capacity for "united action in health, agriculture, education, environmental protection, the welfare of children" as well as the "collective moral will to build a better future".[319] Morality and ethics are here another example of the reflection of more global cooperative and practical efforts, which are found in the proposal for retaining independent functional organisations, which promote global integration, and consequently international peace.

Finally, the importance of the judicial function of the UN is underlined. "In any system of governance, a strong judicial function is necessary to moderate power of the other branches and to enunciate, promulgate, protect and deliver justice… no lasting world civilization can be founded unless it is firmly grounded in the principle of justice".[320] Emphasising the positive elements of the International Court of Justice created in 1945, such as the diversity of a varied international judicial panel, the BIC calls for the extension of the Court's jurisdiction and suggests that other organs of the United Nations, not only member states, be given the right to bring cases before the Court. This suggestion is reflective of cosmopolitan propositions that states cannot be the sole actors in international relations and law. As well as expanding the Court's jurisdiction, the BIC calls for the expansion of issue areas such as international terrorism and drug trafficking. Without doubt, proposals that involve the subject of the International Court of Justice require that it should deliver legally binding decisions. The crucial place of the theme of 'justice' in Bahá'í thought justifies its support for the creation of bodies such as the ICC that places human rights over state interests. "Justice", the BIC states, "is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected".[321] Clearly, practicing justice is another facet of the ethical, normative, and cosmopolitan principles of the Faith based on humanity, and not on states. In light of the 'ethical' and 'spiritual' nature of the Bahá'í Faith, these practical measures to reform the United Nations are not, however, sufficient. The BIC recognises the crucial importance of releasing

---

[317] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations,* 2.
[318] *Ibid,* 12.
[319] *Ibid,*. 2.
[320] *Ibid,*
[321] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 12.

the powers latent in the individual, and providing development paradigms not only with a material, but also a moral and spiritual dimension.[322] The BIC also seeks to instil a closer relationship between peoples and their international organisations in order to invalidate the dichotomy between them and us.[323] Furthermore, the encouragement of the greater participation of women in international affairs – who, in Bahá'í eyes, have an essential role to play in the establishment of Universal Peace – and the promotion of a more just system of global economic justice are important aspects of the BIC institutional reform programme. The BIC, thus, notes:

"Bahá'u'lláh announced the arrival of the time, foretold, in all of the world's scriptures, when humanity would at last witness the uniting of all peoples into a peaceful and integrated society. He said that human destiny lies not merely in the creation of a materially prosperous society, but also in the construction of a global civilization where individuals are encouraged to act as moral beings who understand their true nature and are able to progress towards a greater fulfilment that no degree of material bounty can provide."[324]

The Bahá'í Approach and Cosmopolitan IR

By way of conclusion, I will now highlight some of the similarities, and yet essential dissimilarities of form between IR and the Bahá'í approach, and how the latter can lend support to a growing cosmopolitan IR. Indeed, Bahá'í principles seem to be closely linked to the negatively labelled 'idealist' ('Wilsonian' IR), or neo-idealist (Held, Falk, and Archibugi call for the democratisation of international structures, and global civil movements) branches of IR. Indeed, idealists (as they came to be pejoratively called) promoted the ideals of the League of Nations, the concept of collective security, world citizenship, education, disarmament, an international police force, and arbitration. In addition, the respect for human rights, the alleviation of poverty, and the rule of law are strong features of this conceived order. If, however, the 'idealist' or 'liberal' branch of IR can be criticised for being too universalising, Bahá'í principles emphasise the need for diversity in unity. In other words, as we are 'one human family' (oneness), we have different viewpoints, and sometimes grow to adopt different values (diversity), but we are still able to collaborate, and care for each other.

In this respect, and in order to illustrate the inclusiveness of the Bahá'í perspective on cosmopolitanism, it can also be said that the latter represents a departure in sacred thinking as it does not rely on a believer/infidel

---

[322] "Development should not be confused with the creation of an unsustainable consumer society… Education is the best investment in economic development… Because of the spiritually damaging nature of dependency, schemes which focus solely on redistributing material wealth are doomed to failure in the long run". Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 15.
[323] See Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, 226-227.
[324] Bahá'í International Community, *Turning Point For All Nations*, 22.

dichotomy, but rather stresses the importance of tolerance and philanthropy. Bahá'u'lláh noted that it was indispensable that the peoples of the world "…observe tolerance and righteousness, which are two lights amidst the darkness of the world and two educators for the edification of mankind."[325] By proclaiming the oneness of humanity, Bahá'u'lláh, in addition, dissolved the dichotomy between believer and infidel. He wrote, "There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, or whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly source…"[326] 'Abdu'l'Bahá, in this regard, notes that there is no justification to account for one's own belief as "light and all others as darkness".[327] Bahá'í thinking, therefore, moves away from division (religious beliefs are not a condition to be excluded from the cosmopolis) towards ideas on unity based on the premise that human beings, regardless of gender, race, religion, and class form part of the same, yet diverse, human family. Denominations cannot preclude our common humanity.

It is also relevant to the cosmopolitan tradition that the Bahá'í model does not concentrate on 'events', but rather on the notion of 'process'. Interestingly, it is this focus on events, which discredited the 'idealist' and more normative branch of IR, and promoted the realist tradition through the arguments of the failure of the League of Nations, and the advent of WW2. The Bahá'í model, by focusing on process, sees that 'integrative and disruptive' forces work in opposition to each other, but will eventually lead to peaceful human and state relations. In the very long run, the numerous organisations of civil society and the other organisational consequences flowing from the interdependence of nations can foster cosmopolitan values, and override parochial and conflict-ridden values without undermining the local level and grassroots initiatives often led by women in the so-called developing world. Bahá'í political scientist W. Andy Knight, referring to world disorder as 'disruption' and 'disintegration', writes, "what is clear from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l'Bahá and Shoghi Effendi is that world disorder is a prerequisite for the ushering in of World Order…"[328] This very concept can be linked to this phase of 'transition' and 'transformation' acknowledged by various IR theorists cited at the beginning of this paper.[329] Martin Shaw, likewise, underlines the concept of 'global transition', and propounds the idea that catastrophes (disintegration) often represent a stimulus for transformation: "the gains in the development of international law enforcement have been responses to some of the worst, genocidal episodes among many crimes against humanity, in which millions have suffered."[330]

---

[325] Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36.
[326] The Universal House of Justice, "To the World's Religious Leaders".
[327] Abdu'l'Bahá, in: Horace Holley, (ed.), p. 348.
[328] W. Andy Knight, The New World (Dis)order? Obstacles to Universal Peace, p. 17.
[329] See, for example, James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on Transnationalisation of World Affairs*, London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1980
[330] Martin Shaw, "Globality", p. 172.

However, the acknowledgment of acute crises does not equate to ignoring, belittling, or blindly accepting the traumatic effects of the disintegration process on the body of humankind and the human suffering this generates. Rather, these conditions call for a process of increased awareness and informed engagement that reinforce the caring ethos of world citizens. W. Andy Knight goes on to state:

"Civil wars and internecine violence exploded in places like Afghanistan, Cambodia, Rwanda, the Former Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Columbia. The debacle in Somalia, followed by a genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Serbia and Kosovo, and the politically-motivated slaughter in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Mozambique, and the continued violence in the Middle East, Chechnya, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Zimbabwe, parts of Central and Latin America, and Asia indicated a persistent adherence to a culture of violence in the latter part of the twentieth century… To this can be added longstanding and continuing problems of unchecked population growth, crushing debt burdens, barriers to trade, transnational crime, drug trafficking, the trafficking in women and children, poverty, famine, natural and man-made disasters, political oppression and corruption, the spread of HIV/AIDS, SARS, Mad Cow Disease…"[331]

The choice of employing cosmopolitanism was, firstly, made in consideration of the 'reality' of the oneness of mankind, but also on the grounds that particularistic theories have failed or are failing to manage current world affairs as they foster the politics of human suffering. In addition to its views on IR, Bahá'í ethical cosmopolitanism could be said to represent a contribution to post-positivist, and normative thinking, while retaining the spirit of criticism,[332] and cosmopolitanism in modernity. Bahá'í views contribute to reinforcing the 'sensitive turn' taken by cosmopolitanism, which stresses diversity, in the sense of abandoning a domineering and homogeneous universalism. Indeed, Bahá'í views have been anticipatory of the new 'sensitive' turn promoted by critical international theory, feminist theory, or postmodernism from the last two decades of the twentieth century onwards.[333] Already in the midst of the nineteenth century Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l'Bahá in the early twentieth century, had promoted the deconstruction of 'otherness' as a means to bring about the unity of mankind, and the solidarity of the human race. In the 1910s, 'Abdu'l'Bahá deplored how the notions of otherness impeded the

---

[331]

[332] In the Bahá'í Faith, this delineates the importance of thinking independently from cultural heritage and traditions.

[333] These theories proclaim that discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender... do not serve the welfare of humankind. Their cosmopolitanism is enshrined in restoring a sense of denied dignity to members of the human race.

realisation of the oneness of humankind, and hence the achievement of an unbounded global community. He stated, "See ye no strangers.... for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on **otherness**". [Emphasis added][334] Lately, these anticipatory views have been advanced in new critical IR theories, with the aim of fostering inclusiveness, and deconstructing strangeness and otherness. In particular, critical international theory holds that, by promoting divisions, the division between inside and outside alienate peoples from one another, erects barriers of strangeness, and directly infringe on more peaceful relations.

Bahá'í views relate, and are not entirely dissociated from the 'mainstream' cosmopolitan tradition.[335] Like the latter, they are concerned with the promotion of the common good, the need for more global and peaceful forms of communities, and they seek to discredit the view that human nature is inherently belligerent.[336] Bahá'í views promote global values, the ethos of world citizenship, and the improvement of international institutions (like the United Nations), global institutions (like the International Criminal Court), and the idea of consultation amidst diverse communities. Bahá'í international thinking, indeed, connects to the branch of IR that is concerned with regional and global integration, world order, communities of fate, functional organisations, and the unity of mankind. It calls for the creation of a political, economic, and social system, which will distribute the benefits of interdependence fairly, and not to the advantage of the powerful, thus avoiding extremes in wealth and poverty (here the emphasis is on 'creation'). Indeed, although the interdependence of nations is a cosmopolitan aspect (in the form of globalisation, as a case in point), the Bahá'í view upholds that it is not sufficient for bringing international prosperity in a natural harmony of interests. Bahá'ís, like cosmopolitans such as Richard Falk and David Held point to the much darker side of globalisation. The democratisation and accountability of global institutions is an important facet of this issue, as has been discussed, with the mounting importance of global civil society. The Bahá'í perspective is, in this sense, not idealistic, but rather normative: "It proposes pursuit of change in desired directions through both intellectual and social engagement and not through intellectual idealization alone."[337] World order will not simply usher better conditions due to conditions of global interdependence, but global will and intervention, and unprecedented efforts are required. W. Andy Knight clarifies that although the Bahá'í view upholds that peace is 'inevitable', it does not view it as "an ephemeral 'thing' out there that will somehow fall

---

[334] Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l'Bahá*, p. 24.
[335] *Ibid.*
[336] Kant stands as an exception to this, as he upheld human nature to be essentially warlike.
[337] Graham Hassall, *Contemporary Governance.*

from heaven into the laps of humanity…"[338] In order to be universal and sustainable, peace requires 'a fundamental transformation of world order'.[339]

Where Bahá'ís depart from IR theories, cosmopolitan or not, is that for Bahá'ís, IR theories are the result of speculation, worked out by the human mind. By contrast, they believe that Bahá'í principles do not flow from an activity of the human mind, but are the result of a fusion of reason (to search and choose principles) and faith (to trust the reality of principles that are beyond the speculations of the human mind).[340] World order is, therefore, the amalgamation of elements of human agency (we decide to intervene) and more revelational elements that belong to a non-human and more mystical plan (even if we decided not to intervene, the unity of humanity remains an aspect of a divine plan for mankind). Human agency can decide upon the means and rapidity by which to achieve a process of unity, but this process has already been set in motion. Bahá'í views are, thus, essentially different, in the sense that they have been advocated by a world religion, which asserts the spiritual nature (ethics) of cosmopolitanism, and not only its material side, i.e. global, technological, and physical interdependence. The Bahá'í model reflects the concerns of the secular cosmopolitan approach, and at the same time remains a non-secular approach: the spiritual destiny of mankind lies in its unity. In this way, the Bahá'í model offers a reconciliation between the more ethical views of cosmopolitanism propounded from ancient times to the Enlightenment, and more recent material approaches propounded, for example, by Mitrany's functionalism.

The Bahá'í model could represent a basis for highlighting the relevance to the welfare of humanity of fulfilling both, basic material needs, and those of a spiritual/ethical nature, animated by an ethos of oneness.[341] Material goals are essential (for example, everyone should have the basic human rights to food and shelter) to fulfil the real purpose of humanity, which is 'spiritual' in nature. The reality of humanity is 'spiritual' in the sense that human beings potentially reflect the virtues of a 'higher nature', an aspect given to the whole of mankind, and not only to privileged categories. (This justifies the notion that achieving the unity of humanity does not represent a utopian goal). In turn, the oneness of humankind is both a 'material' (biological/scientific) and a 'spiritual' principle (value-laden), which can assist the reinvention of IR along more inclusive parameters. The Bahá'í approach has, thus, reinforced cosmopolitanism through the exposition of a reality that reflects a 'spiritual' principle of oneness, and whose direction is geared towards a cosmopolitan path. As Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims and

---

[338] W. Andy Knight, *The New World (Dis)order? Obstacles to Universal Peace*, 1.

[339] The basis of faith, for Bahá'ís, lies in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh as a new 'divine' revelation for our global age.

[340] It bears restating that the basis of faith, for Bahá'ís, lies in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh as a new 'divine' revelation for our global age.

[341] In this sense, the oneness of humankind is useful in highlighting the artificiality of the concept of a closed and homogeneous nation, and the divisive and insufficient aspects of a material cosmopolitanism, concepts which are both ethically deficient.

Charles Lerche note, "In our rapidly globalizing era, relevant models of peace building must envision humanity as a collective whole rather than contending parts, be based on global ethics and more fully incorporate the inward, spiritual dimensions of human experience."[342] Here the Bahá'í model of world order can make interesting inroads into International Relations theory, as the reality it describes is not linked to imposition, but rather to emancipation. Emancipation from the bounds of the limitedness of bounded communities, emancipation from overly materialist views which promote inequalities, and emancipation from discrimination based upon the 'unreal' dichotomies of race, class, gender, age etc.... This order, furthermore, to be justifiable, has to be created through human agency and consent, which is supported by the assistance of a not fully comprehensible divine and mysterious Being ('God').

We can also note that the Bahá'í approach assists in giving cosmopolitan 'purpose' to IR, by advocating the need for a level of principle (the oneness of humanity), and privileging the value of unity. The Bahá'í Faith, through the principle of the oneness of humankind, can lend new lenses to IR on how we can possibly view the world. It builds the bridge between the concept of unity, which is now criticised by postmodernism, because of the ideas of totality, domination, and homogenisation, and the concept of diversity of opinions, ethnic characteristics, gender, which can reinforce, and not threaten that unity. Indeed, Bahá'í views reinforce cosmopolitanism by asserting that diversity has been created to contribute to the 'quality' of unity, and that both are not irreconcilable. They assert possible avenues of communication to reach the stage of common understanding, tolerance, awareness of multiplicity of thinking that reinforces the idea of a 'unity', which is the result of manifold aspects, and not only that of a domineering, same, and imposing element.

Moreover, the 'level of principle' asserts the possibility of solving jingoism, xenophobia, and nationalism (the antitheses of cosmopolitanism) at a spiritual level, and as a basis for unity. This is not only dealt with at a mere theoretical level, but also at a very practical one. 'Principles' can serve as a basis for action and transformation; likewise, it can be argued, theories should serve the welfare of humanity, and should exist for a practical purpose. When people recognise the need for unity through the argument of the validity of the oneness of humankind, they are able to deconstruct images of strangeness propounded by the way the world is shaped (that is a world of divided jurisdictions of sovereign states). The way we look at the world when defined by the oneness of humankind, has the potentiality of transforming parochialism into cosmopolitanism. This shows how the level of principle can assist in promoting cosmopolitan attitudes.

---

[342] Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims & Charles Lerche, "Perspectives on Peace Building", in: Charles Lerche (ed.), *Healing the Body Politic*, 22.

Through this reality of oneness, we can construct an alternative way of building the world, not only because it is possible to do so (a post-positivist view), but because it reflects spiritual/divine reality. The Bahá'í Faith creates another level for the realm of the 'possible' in IR, as opposed to asserting the inevitability of the division of the world into the domestic and international spheres. More importantly, Bahá'í views are not only concerned with deliberating philosophically upon possible ways of looking at the world, but they also impart the will to act upon principles, which can give meaning to action, and which can foster the unity of humanity. Moreover, the spiritual/ethical/divine aspects of the Bahá'í Faith can assist in demonstrating the nature of the non-spatiality of our allegiances. The unity of humanity, in the Bahá'í Faith, reveres a non-spatial view of the world, through the 'spiritual' nature of its principles. It belongs to a non-territorial sphere that collapses ideas of inbred division in creation. IR can, thus, be provided with a new basis for defining human solidarity, as the result of the mystical propensity linked to our nature, which shapes the 'reality' of the unity of the species.

Finally, Bahá'í cosmopolitan views revolve around the non-statist turn in IR, which refuse to treat the nation-state (as well as realism) as a focal point of the discipline, and thereby provide a more ethical and spiritual starting-point for debating cosmopolitanism; for destabilising dichotomies that feed discrimination; and for imagining a world community that is conscious of its oneness. In the words of Shoghi Effendi, theories, including IR theories should constantly adjust to new global world conditions:

"The call of Bahá'u'lláh is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine."[343]

The Bahá'í model of world order suggests a transformation in IR, that would reflect flexibility in its approach, the opening of new cosmopolitan avenues, not simply because these reflect the 'reality' of the oneness of mankind, but also because they are of use to the welfare of humanity. Henceforth, theories are not just there for their own sake, but as a prescriptive means, to foster the transformation of a world community

---

[343] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 42.

conscious of its indivisible oneness. The way we look at the world is based on a conception of 'reality' that goes beyond our own minds, where human beings remain principal actors in determining how their world can be constantly improved upon.