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## Governing a Shared World

### Contribution to GTI Forum [Big History and Great Transition](#)

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I very much appreciated David Christian's [essay](#) and its appeal for a more expansive perspective on human history. An enlarged world-centric perspective is absolutely necessary if the global (i.e., world-centric) challenges we face are to be overcome.

Indeed, increasingly larger, more expansive perspectives and physical scales are themselves part of evolution. Every living organism and its society will tend to expand to the limit of its capability subject, of course, to competitors and environmental limitations. Humans are no different, yet our enormous capability and ingenuity is now placing us beyond sustainable limits and puts us in grave danger. The scale of most living organisms or their societies is thus regulated or governed by competition (i.e., predators) or by environmental limits. For humans, on the other hand, regulation and governance will have to be *self-imposed* if we are to prevent ourselves from collapse.

A key aspect of human evolution and, perhaps, of Big History is the history/evolution of the self-regulation/governance of human societies. Seen from such an expansive perspective, we can see that human governance systems have evolved towards ever-larger geographical scales: from family bands to larger tribes to still-larger medieval city-states to today's even larger nation-states. Supranational forms of governance, such as the EU or UN, are also being experimented with. Forms of governance, too, have evolved, generally tending to move from authoritarian to more democratic systems. Likewise, worldviews have gradually expanded in tandem from ego-centric to ethno-centric to nation-centric ways of seeing the world. The challenge today, as Christian points out, is for more of us to take yet a further expansionary step to see the world world-centrally.

The key driver behind this expansion of governance has been technology. New technologies evolve and spread quickly and tend to undermine then-existing systems of governance. A key aspect of a world-centric view on our globalized economy, for example, is to recognize the profound effect that the free movement of capital, corporations, and investment have on national governments. This free movement has engendered in every government the absolute need to maintain the international competitiveness of its national economy. This means competing destructively with other nations in order to maintain healthy levels of employment and inward investment. Such competition, of course, makes it difficult or impossible for them to act adequately on many global problems, including climate change.

From an evolutionary/Big History perspective, life today—be it capital, corporations, communications, the climate, or other problems—has become inescapably global/world-centric, and yet our governance systems are still only national, i.e., nation-centric. There is a governance gap. We need, in short, to evolve some form of coherent international governance that is capable of dealing with world-centric problems so that the scale of governance once again matches the already-global scale of our economy.

While that may sound outlandish, especially given the present state of international relations, humanity is on a trajectory toward collapse and mass die-off unless such a system of governance is put in place. Being able to arrive at such a conclusion, rather than blaming corporations or negligent politicians or capitalism, etc., is, I suggest, the great advantage of taking an evolutionary/Big History perspective. We start to see more clearly what the real problem is in an evolutionary context and what needs to be done about it.

To underline my point about the essentialness of global governance, Christian gave the example of the cooperation demonstrated by multicellular organisms. However, to relate this more precisely to self-regulation and governance, evolutionary biologist John Stewart points out, “If cells could reproduce independently they would compete destructively with each other, making a multicellular organism impossible. What was needed was the emergence of constraints that prevented competition between cells. The constraints that evolved were arrangements that ensured that each cell in a multicellular organism had the same DNA—i.e. the same governance.”<sup>1</sup>

It is, thus, the development of an appropriate form of global governance that evolution now invites us towards. This need not mean a world government but could, for example, take the form of a series of internationally negotiated multi-issue policies that are implemented *simultaneously* by all or sufficient nations. Simultaneously, to avoid any risk of free-riding and to avoid any nation losing out to any other. In that way, global coverage could be achieved without the need for a new institution of world government.

Such “simultaneous policies” are, indeed, beginning to emerge almost automatically as a result of crises. A recent example was the global financial crisis of 2008 during which all the world’s major central banks acted simultaneously to cut interest rates by 0.5%. As the *London Financial Times* reported, this action was “unprecedented” and was a “historic piece of coordination.” Although they were not part of the plan, the newspaper further reported that the People’s Bank of China “moved almost simultaneously” to cut its rate as well.

The advantage of an evolutionary/Big History perspective, then, is that it allows us to see what the underlying problem is and where the focus of our actions should lie.

## **Endnotes**

1. John Stewart, personal email to John Bunzl, June 11, 2022.

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## About the Author



John Bunzl is a global political activist, businessman, and the founder of the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign, a way for citizens to use their votes to drive politicians towards global cooperation. It has supporters in over 100 countries and enjoys the support of a growing number of Members of Parliament around the world. His authored and co-authored books include *The Simpol Solution*, *Monetary Reform – Making it Happen!*, *People-Centred Global Governance – Making it Happen!*, and *Global Domestic Politics*. He has published numerous articles on global governance in the *Journal of Integral Theory & Practice*. He has lectured widely, including to the Schumacher Society, the World Trade Organisation, the Lucis Trust, and various universities.

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## About the Publication

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