

One Earth, One Politics

Building Our Shared Path Toward World Citizenship

By

Scott Leckie and Pablo Rueda

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Preface

Our world is changing. It always is. Nothing is static. Nothing ever is.

This book addresses one of a multitude of changing realities that impact every person, everywhere, every day: the question of citizenship. In the pages that follow, we explore ideas premised on a vision that expands beyond the world of 193 nation-states that form the world's political structure today toward the shaping of a unified human race sharing the same finite planet and where everyone participates within a single political framework. In this new vision, everyone will hold shared and equitable world citizenship rights set within a cosmopolitan global political structure where everyone is a legally recognized world citizen and where all people over the age of sixteen can vote and directly participate in crucial decision-making.

We believe the world's political status quo and all that stems from its social and wealth inequality, violent conflict and occupation, the environmental and climate crises, growing authoritarianism, and so much more will be greatly improved by concrete action based on the democratic will of all humanity rather than allowing our future global society to be constructed by the invisible hands of those ever-wealthier members of the global 1% who control expanding degrees of political and economic power.

This unprecedented concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands is a disaster for democracy and the principles that undergird it. Moving—rapidly—toward a world built on the foundations of world citizenship can kickstart the improvements needed for the better world we all deserve. Such a pathway is nothing less than the antidote to prevailing political trends toward autocracy and bifurcated thinking that separates humanity into groups of us or them.

It may be too obvious to even note, but to cite just one of the countless possible examples, humanity widely accepts and embraces the transnational nature of commerce and business. Companies, such as Amazon,

Spotify, Google, Uber, Samsung, and uncountable others operate on a global basis, almost as if nation-state borders for all intents and purposes did not exist. Business is not alone. Culture is international. Technology is international. Travel is international. Crime is international. Law is international. Politics is international. Yes, the effects of poor national and international decision-making can—and are felt by people at the local levels. But there can be no denying that, despite the populism and inward-looking nationalistic sentiments now underway in many countries, in the end, we believe these will be seen by historians as nothing more than futile attempts to delay the inevitable coming together of the world as a whole in a way it has never done before.

Even if we often neglect to notice, in the first quarter of the 21st century, so much of what we do, see, or think is somehow global in nature—everything, that is, but our politics. As ill-tempered and unhelpful nationalistic or populist fervor takes hold in country after country in lieu of more democratic and positive options of good governance, at the level of daily life for billions of people across the world, we are linked to more people, in more places, concerning more things than ever before. Though we often forget it, we live on a single, shared, extremely finite, and fragile planet, and it's time our politics began recognizing this.

Our economy is now global and will always remain as such. So, too, are the problems that confront all of us and which can only be successfully tackled if we do so on a global basis. One nation-state alone fighting climate change or toxic air pollution can never achieve its objectives. The world working together as a whole, however, can. If we take just one example, the displacement now occurring in Indonesia or deaths that occurred recently in Valencia, Spain on the other side of the planet due to unprecedented severe flooding have the very same global cause: climate change. Indonesia's or Spain's individual actions against global warming are important, but alone, they can only ever achieve a tiny portion of what is required.

And yet, as global as this internationality of both business and crisis may be, these realities exist within a four-hundred-year-old framework

comprised of sovereign nation-states to which most people, most places remain indelibly wed. As a result, most people in most places continue to insist on operating at the level of the nation-state, mistakenly believing that a sense of nationalism combined with a growing interest in autocratic leadership will somehow enable them to resolve the problems they face and spur the true economic potential of wherever they may live. But this inward turn by more and more people in more and more countries will invariably lead to a dead end with nothing positive in the end to show for it. History has revealed this time and time again.

In 2025, the cornerstone of the international legal and political system of governance, the United Nations Charter, will have been in place for eighty years. The world has undergone immense and almost unimaginable change since then. Even in just the past forty years or so, we have moved from an entrenched Cold War between the two superpowers to a growing expansion of democracy and globalization, followed by where we stand today: a visible turn to the political right. There has been a growing embrace of authoritarianism as the delusional panacea for all of the world's ills. It is seen as the best way forward by growing numbers of people from the United States, Argentina, Hungary, and El Salvador to the longer-lasting dictatorships of Russia, China, and others. This inward turn is not solely the result of autocrats taking and retaining power but of people seeking it out and voting for such leaders in those countries where democratic systems remain in place, as we saw recently in the United States with the re-election of Donald Trump.

This book does not deeply examine this growing embrace of strong-man leadership but rather presents a wholly different alternative. Our vision is antithetical to the mean-spirited and often dangerous lurch to the right. Ours is one that instead of looking inward, looks outward. Instead of taking what may appear to many to be the easy way out by voting in despots who will quickly sort things out, we believe that an entirely different way is far more likely to preserve the elements of the present political system that are worth preserving. Moreover, what we propose in the pages that follow will, in our view, facilitate the evolution of a system of politically organizing ourselves as humans first.

This new system will no longer be based solely on nation-states and the increasingly xenophobic attitudes emerging from them but rather on a system premised not on national citizenship but world citizenship—a status that everyone, everywhere can share, just as they share the single planet on which all of us were born and on which all of us depend.

We refuse to accept that the world of today is as good as it can be, let alone that nothing can be done by common citizens across the world to influence the positive shaping of our future. But we believe expanding *outward*, with an embrace of all of humanity, rather than contracting *inward*, will yield the best results. Yes, it is clearly true that since the beginning of the Westphalian Age in 1648, immense progress has been made. Unimaginable advances have been made in terms of health, life expectancy, material wealth, and technology. And yet, as a species, we believe that all of us know that we can do so much better.

In our view, the increased engagement and entanglement of humans everywhere, by creating shared citizenship for all of us, will each contribute to generating a far more sustainable and equitable world than that which exists today. Our vision is one of building on the better foundations of today, seeking to put into place the processes and structures needed to unify the human race as one human family, equal in rights and responsibilities.

We are merely two of millions and millions of people who already see the world through the eyes of world-centric consciousness or whatever terminology people would like to use to describe the premise that we all reside on a single planet comprised of a single species of human beings all of whom are vested with the same value, the same unique worth, and the same irreplaceable preciousness.

With this book, we present some of our concrete ideas on what we see as critical for the emergence of our next stage in political evolution leading toward a system of global governance that protects people and the planet and brings about an infinitely better and more sustainable world than that which exists today. It is our sincere hope that our ideas of creating a new citizenship status we call *Jus Gaia* will generate debate and

action leading to the world promised under timeless documents, such as the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*. In the pages that follow, we also propose the establishment of a new world parliament based on global voting, a new class of independent managers and facilitators of humanity's collectively-made decisions, new educational structures that will prevent and remedy the ever-growing imbalance between private and public schools and universities, and other proposals, all of which will be directed toward shaping our future unified planet. We believe there are hundreds of millions of people who have traveled enough, become friends with enough people from entirely different backgrounds to understand how similar we all are, lived long enough in countries other than where they were born, or who are otherwise so deeply cosmopolitan in orientation that they would happily embrace the world we are envisaging here. A growing proportion of the world has already transcended their national histories, their culture, their religion, and their citizenships. In turn, they embrace all of humanity as a single assemblage, where each person must be ensured—in stark contrast to the world of today—rights, respect, and dignity as equals among equals—world citizens—no matter where they find themselves on the face of our planet.

We firmly believe that the timeless idea of world citizenship might not be the impossible dream that so many dismissively discount it to be. Similarly, we are convinced that given the opportunity to do so, hundreds of millions of people, if not many more than that, are more than ready to make the leap from a world of nation-states to a global polity in which everyone is a key player. It will not be easy to achieve this, and disruption will surely occur. But how can we wait any longer? Those who care about people everywhere and who are concerned about climate change, despotism, conflict, poverty, and inequality are a far larger slice of the human race than most realize. Coming together to discuss and implement the proposals we put forth in the pages that follow is—we hope—one path toward building the oneness world we wish to see. Autocrats and their supporters are increasingly coming together at the international level to push forward their anti-democratic and inequality-driven ways. It is now time for world citizens to

amalgamate into a truly global movement comprised of equal humans who demand equal rights, ever-growing economic prosperity, and the protection of nature, not solely as citizens of their respective nation-states but as citizens of the world, one and all.

Scott Leckie & Pablo Rueda

Foreword

When was the last time you encountered a truly thought-provoking book—and on top of that—an idea whose time has come? Welcome to *One Earth, One Politics*, this brilliant and visionary book by Scott Leckie and Pablo Rueda, promising nothing less than laying out a “path to world citizenship.”

It is a radical endeavor. And one for which I gladly agreed to write this foreword. For one, the sad state of our world today urgently needs fresh and innovative ideas. The toolkit of today’s systems of governance seems unable to solve the myriad problems facing humanity. And since the very definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results, we need to start a serious debate about how to do things differently.

Then there is a personal reason: Although I have yet to meet Pablo in person, I have known Scott for decades, getting to know each other at a private party in the Dutch city of Utrecht in 1990. This was long before Scott founded Displacement Solutions, the NGO that I am proud to serve as chairperson of the Board of Directors, and even before he started his very first NGO, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions. In the decades that followed, I have closely observed how Scott transformed into the kind of world citizen that he and Pablo hope we will all eventually become. Scott has worked to make the basic human right to adequate housing a reality for a great many people, for everyone, everywhere, as he likes to put it. He is a true cosmopolitan, having worked in almost half of the world’s countries. He has lived his life as a world citizen, and I am delighted that he and Pablo have teamed up to write such a compelling and original book.

After decades of work as lawyers and advisors at various levels across the world, Scott and Pablo have now taken their work one important step further by addressing what in their eyes is one of the root causes of many of the maladies affecting humanity today: the nation-state and human’s identification with it. Their proposal of a formal world citi-

zenship status, whereby everyone lives with the same rights and duties grounded in the realization of the inherent oneness of humanity may seem utopian, but I see it as indispensable and an idea whose time has finally come. The way they do this is a world apart from superficial feel-good stereotypes. We have two authors here, deeply steeped in international law, laying out very concrete steps that “We the People” of the Earth (using the opening words of the United Nations Charter) could take *right now* to make our planet a better place to live for all of us.

For millennia, thinkers, philosophers, and politicians have pondered the ideal form of government or the ideal society. So, the bar is high, and the difficulties and hindrances in the realization of the vision outlined in this book are many. But I like to think of Scott’s and Pablo’s work not so much as a finite proposal. For me, it is rather the encouraging starting point of a much-needed debate on how we want to live and what future we envision for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.

I especially like the term they coined. *Jus Gaia* just nails it. It is the consequential extension of *Jus Terrae* and *Jus Sanguinis*. After all, the very core of the red blood cells that stream through all of our veins and arteries are made up of iron. That very iron was born in the explosion of supernovae and scattered around the universe. The very core of our lifeblood is made from interstellar dust, gathered here on planet Earth. Any of us may consider leaving our nation-states, but for the foreseeable future, all of us are bound to Earth, interconnected with all nature and all fellow humans. This book is an important inspiration to bring the vision of a unified planet one step closer.

Matthias von Hein

Investigative Journalist, Bonn, Germany

Chapter 1

A Brief Introduction to a Post-Westphalian World

No matter where you are right now, you are on Earth. No matter where you live today, you were born on Earth. No matter your nationality, your religion, your political persuasion, your wealth, or your poverty, you are a human being, entirely dependent on our solitary planet for your life and survival. How often do we seem to forget this? All eight billion of us, whether we like it, dislike it, acknowledge it (or not), share our single finite world.

The life experience we all share as impermanent human beings may play itself out in often very different ways, depending, in part, on where we happened to be born or where we eventually choose to live, and yet, the attributes of living that we all share are infinitely greater in number than the so-called differences that continue to unnecessarily divide us. The universal attributes of humanness are substantially greater at their core than the comparatively small cultural and other variances of opinion and opportunity. The parental love for a child, the need for daily sustenance and a roof over one's head, the wish for peace and security, the desire to breathe clean air and drink pure water, our virtually identical DNA, and so much more are things we all have in common. These and our other common human traits are entirely independent of the nation-states from which we all stem.

So many of us simply forget that the humanity that we all share, the 206 bones that make our bodies work, the brains between our ears, and the gravity and oxygen that make life possible are simple facts of life upon which we *could* choose to build the political systems that govern us. But it is not these things we share that have formed the basis of the governance structures we have in place across the planet. Rather, since the Westphalian system of nation-states came into being in 1648, it has been the perceived *differences* between the otherwise almost identical

attributes we all share—including more than 99% of our DNA—that have come to define us rather than the shared attributes of life, despite these similarities being so much more prevalent in number. Instead of what we share as members of the same species, the national sovereignty that forms the core element of nation-states and nationhood is not derived from the common attributes of humanity, but rather, it is generally premised on linguistic differences, ethnicity, religion, culture, or the outcomes of the violent conflicts of the past.

The 193 nation-states of today each offer their people a particular national citizenship status based on the sovereign powers held by the nation-state in question. In principle, citizenship should offer people everywhere the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities, but we all know that reality comes nowhere near achieving this. Though we are all humans and equal under the law, we are far from being equal humans in our daily lives. Wealth differentials between and within nation-states have perhaps never been greater. Freedom from violence, occupation, and invasion is enjoyed by an ever-smaller portion of humanity. The proportion of the human race governed by authoritarian, non-democratic regimes led by dictatorial despots continues to grow, as does impunity for human rights violations, the destruction of the natural environment, and other international crimes. Climate change continues to play itself out with ever-worsening consequences for people and the planet. The specter of nuclear decimation hangs threateningly above all of our heads.

If we just focus on this latter point for a moment, that of the never-ending threat of nuclear annihilation, let us recall why these weapons exist in the first place and why the quest to acquire them by some of those nation-states currently without them continues apace. Of course, the declared rationale behind the development of what became city-destroying, and potentially Earth-destroying, nuclear warheads was that “the other guys” might beat us to it, so we’d better beat them to it as a means of protecting ourselves. We all know what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 when the earlier and far less lethal versions of these weapons were used for the first and only time, but we need,

dispassionately, to stand back for a moment and consider why nuclear weapons are a core part of the arsenals of too many countries. What could possibly possess a government to want to maintain the potential to destroy our only planet in order to protect and preserve one's nation-state and its sovereignty, even if this means the inevitable destruction of all of humanity? Recall that the vast majority of nation-states thankfully *do not* possess nuclear weapons, nor do they wish to acquire them. But those nine countries that do possess them—between them a total of more than thirteen thousand warheads—have enough firepower to kill everyone alive today many times over. It is not an oligarchic class that holds these civilization-destroying weapons but nation-states. It is not individual dictators or generals that possess these weapons but nation-states. It is these very same nation-states that ostensibly seek to preserve their existence by threatening all of humanity.

The existence of nation-states is not predicated on possessing the military power to destroy the planet. To reiterate: *184 countries possess no nuclear weapons and only nine do*. Yes, most of the poorer nations of planet Earth do not possess nuclear warheads—although highly impoverished countries, such as North Korea and Russia most certainly do. However, most of the world's healthy and wealthy nations do not nor do they wish to have nuclear weapons on their soil. *This is the majority view*. The minority view of the nine holders of nuclear bombs, as economically dominant as parts of it may be, is that protecting their nation-state, their sovereignty, and their unique part of the planet is so vital that it is worth putting the entire human race at risk. At its core, it is the collective delusion within the power structures of all of the countries that possess these abhorrent weapons that they are special, unique, exceptional, and the best there is that drives this dangerous fantasy. Possessing such tools of violence is essentially predicated on a dangerous us-vs.-them mentality that flies in the face of the attributes of humanity we all share. Chinese nationals are no less or more valuable than Americans, Israelis, or the British. French nationals are no less or more valuable than Belarusians, Indians, or Pakistanis. Having nuclear weapons is simply a way of preserving the legal fiction of the nation-states possessing them. For the thousands of years that people lived within what are now the

borders of the nation-states holding nuclear weapons, there were no nation-states lording over them. For the brief period that they have existed, however, those possessing the nuclear codes are willing to put all of humanity at risk to keep in place a nation-state because of its grandiose position as the arbiter of greatness and grandeur when compared to everywhere else. Clearly, we need a better way.

This book aims to provide simple, new, and innovative perspectives on the age-old question of global governance premised on world citizenship for all. The idea of a unified global polity based on the will of the population of the human race as a whole leading to a planet governed by world citizens emerged with Socrates, Diogenes the Cynic, and the Stoics and has since been popularized by Immanuel Kant, Woodrow Wilson, Bob Marley, Vandana Shiva, Ken Wilber, and many others. Much has changed since these ideas were first posited, and this book outlines why and how such a shift will be indispensable if our shared planet and civilization are to survive and thrive in the decades and centuries to come.

It examines some of the key measures that will need to be taken to build a global polity that is, for once, fully capable of protecting the rights of everyone within a global democracy free of dictators, autocrats, and other non-democratic forces that today govern far too many of the world's nation-states. It will take into account all technological, economic, political, and other developments that have occurred since the establishment of the Westphalian system of nation-states that has been a core element of global governance for almost four hundred years. With today's advancements in the digital realm, AI, globalization, law, economics, and countless others, the quest for a global polity may in fact be closer and more attainable than ever, even if a superficial view of global politics at the moment may seem to indicate the opposite.

Today's technological revolution is, in essence, a global revolution. Today's major threats, such as climate change, are global problems. To attempt to tackle the significant side effects of the technological revolution or climate change through the increasingly archaic nation-state institutions of the past centuries will serve only to aggravate these

global issues and will put the planet and its people, animals, and plants onto the verge of extinction.

In the chapters that follow, we address the rather timeless conundrum of moving humanity away from the nation-state structures of today toward a planet-wide single democratic political system comprised of world citizens voting for a world parliament and a rotating system of leadership. In a world of so much conflict, inequality, instability, and ever-worsening environmental challenges, it may seem the worst of times to propose such an idea—that all humans would be best served were we all to share the same world citizenship status and all that implies. The authors firmly believe, however, that the status quo simply is no longer capable of overcoming the global challenges facing humanity and that a global polity may be the only viable means of protecting the rights of the entire human race on an equitable basis.

As counterintuitive as it may seem given current global political conditions, the authors believe that it is precisely at chaotic times such as these that positive and unexpected changes can quickly come into being. Indeed, it is our ever-strengthening conviction that if our key objective is building a better and fairer world and, in the process, unifying humanity, we must start by ensuring that everyone has the same citizenship.

Our vision is one of a planet that is home to world citizens, each and every one of us sharing as much, or even more, of allegiance to Earth as we do now to the legal fiction to which we attribute so much value and which we call nation-states. We strive for a new political reality where we all share the same legal status, the same legal rights, the same obligations, and the same status as fellow human beings. We seek a world where universal rights are enjoyed universally—a world without tax havens, dictatorships, occupation, without nuclear weapons, all guided by a legal system grounded deeply within the comprehensive body of international human rights law.

This vision of a better world and a better humanity clearly cannot be completed overnight, but millions of people alive today have already

begun this journey by intuitively *feeling* like world citizens, living their lives as such, and embracing fellow human beings—notwithstanding their citizenship or nationality—as one unified global family. Though none of us anywhere can legally claim in 2025 to be a *legal* world citizen in a manner that is fully recognized by all jurisdictions across the world, many of us are already comfortable with such a perspective based on the inherent commonality of human beings everywhere.

In 2025, there will be more people living outside of their countries of birth than ever before—some three hundred million of us, including the two authors of this book. There are more countries selling passports and granting new forms of citizenship to those with the ability to pay than ever before. There are more possibilities of acquiring rights to reside in other countries than one's own than ever before. There are more people visiting other countries and befriending other nationalities than ever before. Culture—food, music, film—has never before been more global in nature. Technology is by its very nature global. With these changes, the meaning of citizenship has become increasingly pliable. Far from restricting the ability of human beings to feel and *legally* become world citizens, this flexibility in the meaning given to the concept of citizenship provides us with a basis for realistically envisioning what the legal status of world citizenship could look like in the real world.

Bearing these developments in mind, among other questions, this book will ask: What if upon birth, starting say, in 2030, every baby born on Earth, every single new human being, was issued *both* a world citizenship status *and* national membership within whatever polity they were born into, as they are today—Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, American, Tuvaluan, Maltese, South African, and all the rest? What if, after the passage of a decade or two, this at-birth conferral wherever birth occurred, in effect creating the legal status of *Jus Gaia*, became so normal, so commonplace, that people everywhere accepted it as a fact of life, much as humans have done with so many new inventions, be they smartphones, the internet, cars, or air conditioning?

Today, there is universal acceptance that a baby born in the state of Bavaria in Germany, for instance, is granted both German and European Union citizenship at birth—but not locally-based Bavarian nor planetarily-based world citizenship. Such a view is so widely accepted that it is rarely, if ever, questioned. What if, then, we were to enter a new era where, blindingly fast, people everywhere simply assumed that every baby born was automatically granted world citizenship on the basis of a new legal doctrine called *Jus Gaia*? Perhaps by 2050—or possibly even far sooner than that—the same reality will have taken hold with regard to everyone’s world citizenship status because it is just so obvious that it must if we are to save our species and the world as a whole.

Jus Gaia is a concrete legal methodology by which we can create the legal status of world citizen whereby—at last—humans are treated equally as humans. The establishment of a universal system of world citizenship will jumpstart the ancient vision of cosmopolitanism, and in the process, build an ever more cosmopolitan planet. Nussbaum outlines the vision of the cosmopolitans in the following manner:

“Under cosmopolitan law, all human beings are in a very deep sense worthy of equal respect and concern. The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation. Recognizing this, we should not allow differences of nationality class ethnic membership, or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs and give it our first allegiance and respect. As Marcus puts it, ‘My city and my country, as I am Antonius, is Rome; as I am a human being, it is the world’ (VI.44) Seneca is especially eloquent in describing the beauty of humanity and the attitude of quasi-religious awe with which he is inspired by his contemplation of a human being’s rational and moral purpose, which he compares to the awe with which one might contemplate the sublime beauty of nature (Ep. 41). Respect for humanity is a regulative ideal, against which all actual earthly politics should be measured.”¹

¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble But Flawed Idea*, Belknap/Harvard, 2019, pp. 75-76.

Similarly, Appiah, in his iconic book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, reminds us that:

“There are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance.”²

These ideas may have ancient origins, but their relevance is greater today than ever before. Vince puts this clearly in terms of the necessity of humans *coming together* to fight climate change:

“[W]e must come together as a global society to address this human-made problem. We are a planetary species, dependent on a single shared biosphere. We must look afresh at our world and consider where best to put its human population and meet all of our needs for a sustainable future.”³

Of course, despite what we see as genuinely convincing arguments in favor of a systemic move away from the principles of Westphalia toward a more just and unified world, there are important reasons why the ideal of world citizenship, or even the idea of a cosmopolitan world, have yet to become the universal realities that those supporting these perspectives would like them to be. For instance, as Nussbaum points out:

“The Stoics have identified a very serious problem for any moderate cosmopolitanism. A few rare human beings may be able to have intense love and concern that is truly cosmopol-

² Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, WW Norton, 2006, 15.

³ Gaia Vince, *Nomad Century: How to Survive the Climate Upheaval*, Allen Lane, 2022, 15.

itan (compatible with due respect for all human life and due attention to the just claims of all) and to live their lives with an awareness of the equal worth and the equal needs of all. But once we let the passions back in, we will discover that they are not stably supportive of these ends.”⁴

In striking contrast to this vision of unity and love for humanity as a whole is an entirely adversative vision where advocates support the calving off of pieces of territory into more isolated and smaller political entities surrounded by ever higher and more impregnable walls. This is nothing less than a recipe for disaster, and most distinctly not the way to build a fairer and more equitable planet. Recall that the billionaire class is comprised of just over three thousand people (88% of whom are male) who desire nothing more than a world designed by billionaires for those billionaires in a system benefitting those billionaires.

Often couched in terms of “greater freedom,” as Slobodian so eloquently exposes in his book *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*, billionaires, such as Peter Thiel and others wish for the very opposite of what we are proposing in this book. Rather than the unified political system that we would like to see in a more equitable and just world where all humans are treated legally as equal world citizens, Thiel and others favor the so-called “freedom” that will be brought about with a never-ending growth in the number of countries, presumably with the aim of creating ever more numbers of places to park their growing bank accounts. As Thiel once said, “If we want to increase freedom, we want to increase the number of countries.”⁵

Slobodian reminds us that city-states, havens, enclaves, free ports, high-tech parks, duty-free districts, and innovation hubs by the thousands are in place across the world today, fifty-four thousand zones at last count, each of which maintains unique legal and other jurisdictional statuses designed to evade the full spectrum of laws within the larger

⁴ Supra Note 1, Nussbaum, 93.

⁵ Quinn Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*, Allen Lane, 2023.

political entity in which they exist. Beyond weak or non-existent labor and other human rights protections, such “zones” provide a convenient place for holding (and hiding) offshore wealth and keeping it out of reach of national tax agencies. Moreover, the more jurisdictions that are created—and Thiel and his adherents apparently wish for a world of a thousand countries or more—the easier it will be for those with the resources to do so, to escape legal duties to pay tax within countries where they are domiciled. In effect, this vision of ever-more nation-states and a-jurisdictional zones represents not a step forward for our species but a highly regressive step backward into the realms of pre-Westphalian city-states, replete with no real state, no real rule of law, and no real justice.

Yes, such a system might be seen as virtuous by those favoring the processes of decentralization, a process which, in principle, has many attributes but one which, at a global and political level, only results in further bifurcation, a further splitting apart of humanity into smaller and smaller tribes accountable only to one’s own enclave with scant concern for the rest of humanity with whom the planet is shared. Unfortunately, the vesting of what should be global responsibilities to local institutions toward the ostensible resolution of global issues will only serve to ensure that such problems will remain perpetually unresolved.

A world parliament elected by world citizens, on the other hand, that created and empowered an international tax system, tax code, and tax collection agency would be one way to guard against this, but these institutions can only exist in a world governed by a unified global polity designed to ensure the full protection of all rights and freedoms at a level significantly higher than those of today. A unified system of global governance may be the only way to ensure a planet governed by democracy instead of dictatorship, the only way to adequately confront the ravages of climate change, the only way to eradicate poverty and build the foundations for actual equality among all human beings, and the only way to achieve the vision of so many people that unifying our species is the only way forward. As author Gaia Vince puts it:

“Never has our species’ cooperative ability been so necessary; never will it be so tested. The scale of our crisis requires new global cooperation, including new international citizenship and global bodies for migration and for the biosphere—new authorities that are paid for by our taxes and to which nation-states are accountable. The political theorist David Held argued that we have outgrown our national boundaries through increasing globalization, and now live in ‘overlapping communities of fate’ from where we should form a cosmopolitan democracy at a global level ... We need some sort of global governance with enforceable powers.”⁶

Indeed. The time for global governance has arrived, and it remains for all of us to advocate for it with conviction, using strong arguments and a plea to our shared humanity who everyone, everywhere intuitively feels. This book outlines some of our ideas of the concrete and real-world steps that can be taken *today* to form a positive, life-affirming wedge against the forces of planetary destruction, autocracy, inequality, corporate and billionaire control, and increasingly vicious conflict. Such a vision is, we are aware, highly disruptive of the prevailing status quo, but perhaps the way to achieve a unified world is for people everywhere to simply live out their lives as the world citizens they already are.

No one knows for certain what portion of the eight billion of us alive today would self-identify as world citizens, but we are convinced that the numbers are far higher than people may initially think. Although borders, passports, national laws, and other forces place very serious obstacles in the way of people living comprehensively as the world citizens they see themselves to be, in countless ways we can all live as world citizens as we await the inevitable arrival of *Jus Gaia* and all that that will imply. Many will say that a vision of a unified planet of world citizens is absurd, something that only the most deluded of people could possibly believe could ever become a reality. And yet, we live in a very different age than the times of Diogenes, Cicero, Socrates,

⁶ Supra Note 3, p. 101.

and Kant,⁷ or any of the other early cosmopolitan thinkers. Arguably, the technological, cultural, and economic advances of today place us into the best possible position of any previous generation to achieve a unified world in our lifetime.

World citizens—whether from Denver, Denmark, Da Nang, or anywhere else—can play an active role in bringing this vision to reality, some active and many others in ways we would define as pro-actively passive. We can all speak out in support of the need for and benefits of greater global unity—not the least of which are the economic arguments that could be gained from removing borders—and propose ideas and visions (as we have tried to do in this book) of what a more unified world could look like and what steps could be taken to expedite this.

But, so too, we can imagine other ways by which world citizenship can rapidly unfold, often out of view of those who would sadly feel threat-

⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum's book *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble But Flawed Idea*, (Belknap/Harvard, 2019) contains a range of viewpoints on the question of cosmopolitanism, some of the key elements of which are quoted here: "And by calling himself not simply a dweller in the world but a citizen of the world, Diogenes suggests, as well, the possibility of a politics, or a moral approach to politics, that focuses on the humanity we share rather than the marks of local origin, status, class, and gender that divide us." (pp. 1-2); "The only correct political order was, he said, that in the world (kosmos) as a whole (6-72) (p. 2); "Grotius, like Cicero, gives moral importance to the nation, but he also argues that nations and their citizens have moral obligations to people in other nations." (p. 11); "How can either individuals or nations possibly say to whom we owe the finite resources we have unless we do draw the line at our friends and fellow nationals'?" (p. 62); Diogenes clearly believes that all human beings contain something fine within and that this potential is a deep source of human equality." (p. 69); "More important by far is the Stoic insistence on a certain way of perceiving our standing in the moral and social world. We should view ourselves as fundamentally and deeply linked to humankind as a whole, and take thought in our deliberations, both personal and political, for the good of the whole species." (p. 74); "This capacity for reason makes us fellow citizens." (p. 75); "Marcus carries it further "If the reason is common, so too is law; and if this is common, then we are fellow citizens. If this is so, we share in a kind of organized polity. And if that is so, the world is as it were a city-state (M. Aur. Med. 9.4) (p. 75); "The Stoics stress that to be a world citizen one does not need to give up local identification and affiliations. Hierocles argued that we should regard ourselves not as devoid of local affiliations, but as surrounded by a series of concentric circles." (p. 77); and "Each child who is born, is, as Kant says, therefore not just a little worldly being, but also a little world citizen (Weltburger)." (p. 207).

ened by it. Much like the interesting phenomenon of the *Tang ping*⁸ movement in China, whereby growing numbers of Chinese citizens simply refuse to participate within the prevailing economic and political system by laying down, perhaps the way to bring about *Jus Gaia* will be for ever-growing numbers of us to simply live to the maximum extent possible as if we are *already* world citizens in law as much as we are in fact. There is nothing stopping any of us—no law, no religion, no impermeable force—from viewing all of humanity as one consolidated family and befriending, respecting, and loving anyone from anywhere, anytime. There is nothing anyone can do to prevent any of us from communicating with people from everywhere else and laughing, joking, and smiling with people from all corners of our exquisite planet. We can all listen to music from everywhere, eat food from all cultures, and read books about our shared humanity. Growing numbers of us can travel within our countries and beyond them, and in the process, learn ever more deeply about our shared humanity. More of us can express our abhorrence of dictatorship, division, a growing concentration of wealth, ethnic and religious hatred, military occupation, and all the rest. And in the end, perhaps far sooner than we could imagine today, we will come closer together than we ever have. We will increasingly see all humans as just that, humans, not as the other, not as strangers, not as enemies but as fellow humans with whom all of us share an almost identical genetic code.

While farcical dictators may use the toolkits of fear developed by fascists of earlier eras in an effort to delude their populations into thinking that we are all different, a species destined to live in increasingly isolated ethnic, racial, or even elite enclaves, we know reality is very different from this. Millions upon millions of us *know* that our good fortune as humans who are able to experience life is something to be in awe of, something like a miracle on the only planet we are aware of where life exists at all.

⁸ *Tang ping* is a Chinese slang neologism that describes a personal rejection of societal pressures to overwork and over-achieve, such as in the 996 working hour system, which is often regarded as a rat race with ever-diminishing returns. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_ping.

Those of us with world-centric consciousness—something accessible today to everyone and anyone—know that our species is worth preserving and that we will need to embrace people and ideas from everywhere for the planet to flourish. We can no longer be restrained by the very nature of the Westphalian worldview and need to recognize—paraphrasing Plato in his *The Republic*—that when institutions fail to achieve what they are designed to achieve, those who seek power are all too often those who are least qualified and most aggressive. We see this already occurring in today's world in too many places.

We do not *believe* that everyone, everywhere is inherently invaluable; we *know* it. We know that the interconnections that entwine us all are the basis on which we should be governed. We are well past the time of us vs. them, of political structures built on difference, of thinking that somehow we can live in isolation from the rest of the planet on which every single one of us is dependent. Our first step in reaching the better world we all deserve is creating the legal doctrine of *Jus Gaia*.

Chapter 2

Jus Gaia: Creating the Legal Status of World Citizen

*"I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies broken.
I see the landmarks of European kings removed.
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks (all others
give way:)
Are all nations communing?
Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming en-masse? For lo. Tyrants tremble. Crowns
grow dim.
The earth. Restive. Confronts a new era."*

—Walt Whitman from "Years of the Modern"

If we are to advance as a single world civilization that is capable of living as *one*, evolving together into a better future than the present, much of this will be made possible, or alternatively, impossible, by how we treat the question of citizenship. Whether we accept it or not, our division into 193 official citizenships legally and officially differentiates us from one another. While many of us will effortlessly transcend such differentiation, for others with less experience working with, knowing, befriending, and loving those with passports different than our own, the leap toward transcendence may be too far to bridge. Nevertheless, this transcendence exists within all of us, a kernel of incontrovertible world citizens can be found within us all; it simply needs to be accessed and then allowed to blossom.

Let us begin with the basics: What is a citizen? A typical definition of the word "citizen" defines the term as follows: 1. An inhabitant of a city or town, especially one entitled to the rights and privileges of a free-man; 2. A member of a state or a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection from it; and 3. A

civilian is distinguished from a specialized servant of the state.⁹ Indeed, this is roughly how citizenship is perceived in the age in which we live. But let us delve a bit deeper into these questions briefly and examine why we believe it is well overdue to start thinking of new iterations of citizenship that might be more appropriate for this stage of human evolution in which we all now find ourselves.

Most people may occasionally think about their citizenship, but far more rarely do the citizens of the world contemplate the precise and often immense implications that one's citizenship has on virtually every important aspect of life. One's citizenship status can determine where we live and what type of access we are given to certain rights, entitlements, and government programs. It can determine the type of work we do and even whether or not we can leave or return to our own countries. Citizenship can even affect, often significantly, how many years we are likely to live, what types of diseases we may get, what languages we are taught to speak, and whether or not we will have access to hospitals, doctors, and medicines. In the end, citizenship dictates—at least to a degree—how each waking moment of one's life will unfold.

Citizenship matters greatly. This is why we need to begin rethinking the meaning of this term and start considering new notions of citizenship that, rather than being exclusive in nature, become inclusive, become shared, become one of the many vehicles or tools upon which we build the sustainable world we all deserve but which is now far too distant. Indeed, each and every one of us has the very real potential to become world citizens in heart, in soul, and in law. The possibility of enjoying the extraordinary bounties of feeling, of knowing, that you (and everyone else) are an integral, inseparable part of the human family, based on an understanding that the world citizen within all of us, implicitly cares about everyone else, just as they care about you, exists. Without exception, it is open to all of us.

⁹ <https://www.civiceducationva.org/a21.html#:~:text=A%20citizen%20is%3A,and%20privileges%20of%20a%20freeman.&text=2%20b%3A%20a%20native%20or,specialized%20servant%20of%20the%20state.>

But how do we get there? How do we reach a point when the critical mass, the tipping point, is reached, whereby feeling like a world citizen is as much a part of life as going to school or getting a roof over one's head, where it is simply a normal, accepted, universal part of being alive? How do we attempt to create conditions where people instinctually know that their standing and embrace of their world citizenship status benefits them directly, just as their (at least theoretically) national citizenship status should?

How can nationalists be peacefully convinced that life as a world citizen, a cosmopolitan, a core member of the human family, is simply so much more interesting, fulfilling, and complete than the inward-looking, bifurcated, and reductionist ways they currently view the world? Nationalism can take many forms, but all too often, toxic versions of these sentiments are almost invariably accompanied and driven by irrational fears, built on contrived hatreds of the "other," replete with blame games and an inevitable sense of deluded superiority. Gently nudging those with such worldviews into more loving views of our species is rarely easy but always worth the effort.

In the world we live in today, citizenship as a concept can be both *exclusive* and *inclusive*, but far more often it is the former, than it is the latter. A citizen from Country X (apart from the small number of people holding multiple citizenships) holds an *exclusive* status with regard to citizens from Country Y and, indeed, from all other citizenships, for better or for worse. As one of the world's leading authorities on citizenship rights, Barbara von Rutte makes clear, "The role citizenship plays is an ongoing marker of exclusion."¹⁰ She reminds us that "Citizenship determines who can enter and stay in a state, who belongs to the *demos*, and for whom a state is responsible vis-à-vis other states."¹¹

The very nature of the concept of citizenship, as we define it today, tends to be *exclusionary* vis-à-vis all others who do not share the same citizen-

¹⁰ Barbara von Rutte, *The Human Right to Citizenship: Situating the Right to Citizenship Within International and Regional Human Rights Law*, Brill/Nijhoff, 2022.

¹¹ *Id.*

ship. One's citizenship status, in practice, can formalize the different degrees of access between those included and those excluded. In this respect, one could argue quite convincingly that the way in which citizenship manifests today and how the process of citizenship conferral is generally governed is a central reason for growing inequality in the world, particularly between the Global North and Global South. Within the Westphalian system that has been in place since 1648, citizenship is granted based on the location of one's birth (*Jus Soli*) or descent (*Jus Sanguinis*), with several important exceptions we will discuss later. The right to have nationality and citizenship are premised on one's status as a human and can never be denied or revoked purely on the grounds of what a person may think or believe or to which political party or religion they may belong. Human rights in their entirety cannot be enjoyed today without possession of valid citizenship. That is how the system works, and it is upon these principles that the system remains based. But promisingly, as von Rutte and Kerber have noted, citizenship "means what we make it mean. Citizenship is a relative concept and subject to change."¹² We could not agree more.

It remains true that international laws generally speak far more frequently about the right to nationality than a right to citizenship per se, but this is changing. These terms may be colloquially used interchangeably, but they are not synonymous with one another in law. Article 15 of the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* proclaims: "(1) Everyone has a right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality." Citizenship or nationality, as we define them today, signifies the legal bond people have between them and a state.

In her important book, von Rutte speaks of the shift from a right to *nationality* to a right to *citizenship*. We wish to bring this shift one step further toward a tangible, legal right to world citizenship leading to a point in time where every human alive shares their citizenship with everyone else, just as we already share our planet, our finite and imper-

¹² Id.

manent lives, and our membership in the unique species of which we are all a part.

What we propose is the end of exclusive nation-state-derived nationality/citizenship as the pre-eminent status of human beings. Under the new arrangements we suggest, people may keep their nationality but everyone, everywhere would equally have the right and assurance of world citizenship. This humanity-based citizenship (as opposed to nation-state-based citizenship) should be modeled far more along the lines of the Aristotelian perspective of a citizen: as someone who is both ruler and ruled, than the generic Greek meaning of citizenship, which was far more exclusionary in nature. It was upon this basis, perhaps, that Socrates felt compelled to famously exalt, "I am neither a citizen of Athens, nor of Greece, but a citizen of the world."

One change that we believe will be needed is a gradual evolution of the exclusive systems of citizenship morphing into systems of *complete inclusivity*. Sometimes, citizenship is already at least partially *inclusive*, as is the case with those holding European Union passports. Among other things, those holding EU passports are entitled to live, marry, work, and retire in any other EU country, all the while maintaining the exclusive status of any additional rights that may be ensured by their national passport. Nowhere yet, however, do we have in place an all-inclusive system of world citizenship where all people everywhere possess not only the same citizenship but also the same rights and duties, entitlements, and responsibilities.

A first step in this process could involve the simple issuance of official certification to all people reaffirming the rights they already have under international human rights laws and other treaties. Such certification would then be built upon, leading eventually to a formal *Jus Gaia* status for every human alive today and all others born in the future.

We believe it is only when we reach this stage of our political evolution that humanity can come anywhere near its true potential. We agree with the sentiments expressed by Welton when he writes: