

# 12

## Conclusion

### Chapter Summary

The conclusion centres around an important question: What might the future of the world look like? While no one knows for sure, and there are arguments put forward by both optimists (who envision a **utopia**) and pessimists (who see more of a **dystopia**), one possible solution to most of the world's problems is an effective world government. This idea is then considered in reference to the various options available for **global governance**. These sit along a continuum and include (from the loosest, least governed model to the most tightly and highly governed): international anarchy, international association, League of Nations era, United Nations era (today's form of global governance), federal world government, and unitary world government.

True world government (federal or unitary models) is beyond today's current reality, though there are three strong arguments in favour of moving in such a direction. First, from the realist perspective, the biggest problem in international relations is the "assurance problem," wherein countries simply cannot trust each other. A true world government would actually solve this problem and enable cooperation on a wide range of issues. Second, previous empirical cases of success; especially the European Union today and the United States federal government historically, which was empowered to solve problems common to the various early states (e.g., Massachusetts, New York, Virginia, etc.). Third, a world government is the natural course for the world because of increasing global development and interconnections (one government for one world is simply the appropriate mode of governance).

On the other hand, there are also five good arguments against world government. First, Christian Protestants have traditionally been opposed to world government, and this may make it a difficult sell in countries with deep Protestant backgrounds (like Britain and the United States). Second, more government may not actually be the solution to the world's problems. Third, there are numerous obstacles and enemies to achieving world government in practice. Fourth, stable governments grow naturally out of the communities they govern, so a world government needs an international community (with shared values), which may not yet exist. Fifth, world government can also easily become a coercive force and lead to global imperialism.

The theories of German philosopher Immanuel Kant are then presented and offered as a potential alternative or middle-road option between international anarchy and world government. The final section revisits the ideas of bottom-up pluralism, discussed in Chapter 11, and suggests other ways of making the world a better place for everyone.

## Key Concepts

**Anarchy:** the absence of government (literally means “no rules,” an ungoverned condition). (p. 405)

**Cosmopolitan federation:** a form of global governance supported by German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his influential essay, “Perpetual Peace.” (p. 413)

**Democratic deficit:** distance between local citizens and some international institutions. (p. 410)

**Democratic peace thesis:** theory proposed by philosopher Immanuel Kant and more recently extended and developed by political scientist Michael Doyle. It suggests that democracies have never gone to war against each other, nor will they ever do so. Kant argued that increasing peace in the world thus depends on increasing the number of democratic countries in the world. (p. 413)

**Dystopia:** an unhappy, conflict-torn future, which marks regression from where we are today. (p. 404)

**Executive:** one of the three branches of government; tasked with enforcing the laws, necessitating a supporting bureaucracy as well. (p. 406)

**Global governance:** referring to institutional attempts at global problem-solving, ranging from loose initial efforts via the League of Nations to today’s international institutions, notably in the United Nations system. It can also, however, refer more ambitiously to issues of needed reform, up to and including potential kinds of world government. (p. 404)

**International system:** the current state of affairs, that began around 1650, and is also called the interstate system. (p. 405)

**Judiciary:** one of the three branches of government; tasked with interpreting laws and peacefully resolving conflicting interpretations of the law. (p. 406)

**Legislature:** one of the three branches of government; tasked with debating, researching, and crafting laws. (p. 406)

**Nepotism:** the practice by those in power to favour their relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs. (p. 410)

**Non-voluntary world state:** a requirement of true world government, it would also need the traditional three branches of government. (p. 406)

**Republican government:** type of government that Kant believed would result in world peace because republican governments do not go to war against each other. (p. 413)

**Risk management:** proper assessment and evaluation of risk and whether it should or should not be taken. (p. 412)

**Three branches of government:** a legislature (to debate, research, and craft laws); an executive (to enforce the laws, necessitating a supporting bureaucracy as well); and a judiciary (to interpret laws and peacefully resolve conflicting interpretations of the law). (p. 406)

**Utopia:** a happy, peaceful, progressive future. (p. 404)

## Study Questions

Scroll to the end for answers.

1. What are the six options for global governance?
2. What are the three arguments in favour of world government?
3. What are the five arguments against world government?

## Weblinks

“Collapse” (documentary video by *National Geographic*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDHj46rgOms>

- A hypothetical look at how present day society might collapse by the year 2210, based on the book by Jared Diamond (see Further Readings)

“Why Societies Collapse” (Ted Talks video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IESYMFtLLis>

- Ted Talk by Jared Diamond about reasons societies fail, the lessons to be heeded from historical cases, and how to prevent societal collapse in the future; a good complement to his book (see Further Readings) and the documentary (see above)

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

<https://www.sipri.org/>

- Well-respected Swedish think tank dedicated to research into conflict, arms control, and disarmament; most well-known publication is the SIPRI Yearbook, which serves as an authoritative source on global peace and security in the past year

## Further Readings

Orwell, George. 2008. *Animal Farm*. London, United Kingdom: Penguin UK.

- By the famed author of *1984* and first published in 1945, this novel chronicles a socialist revolution on a farm by the animals who live there, and traces the history of a revolution gone wrong; an excellent satire on the corrupting influence of power and an analogy of the Russian Revolution.

Bradbury, Ray. 2013. *Fahrenheit 451: A Novel*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

- A classic novel about a dystopian future where television rules and literature is about to become extinct, first published in 1951.

Vonnegut Jr, Kurt. 1969. *Slaughterhouse Five*. New York, NY: Dell Publishing.

- A classic anti-war novel by one of America's most famous writers. The book centres on the Dresden fire-bombings during World War II, through which the author lived.

Diamond, Jared. 2011. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, Revised Edition*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

- A follow-up to the author's Pulitzer prize winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (see Further Readings, Chapter 1), this book explores how climate change, population explosion, and political discord create the conditions for the collapse of civilization and how some societies have found solutions and persisted.

## Answers to Study Questions

1. The six options are international anarchy (no international association); international association (voluntary only, no international institutions); League of Nations era (some binding international institutions, but few and weak); United Nations era (today's form of global governance); federal world government; and unitary world government. (p. 405)
2. World government would solve the assurance problem that is the foundation of interstate relations and results in lack of trust between countries. Previous examples show the potential of world government (European Union today and US federal government historically). A world government is most appropriate for the developed and interconnected world of today. (pp. 407–409)
3. The arguments against world government are traditional opposition from Christian Protestants; more government may not be the solution to the world's problems; obstacles and enemies to realizing world government in practice; lack of an international community to support a world government; possibility of coercion and global imperialism. (pp. 409–413)