

“Wiki” Government Rises from the Ashes of the Nation-State

Forecasts:

- **A confluence of economic, ecological, and security crises overwhelms national governments, leading to a long-term decline of the nation-state through the early 21st century.**
- **By 2039, a new system of governance has emerged, linking values-based communities and providing guidance and mediation in global economics, ecology, and security.**

When it rains, it pours. The economic crisis of 2008 touched off a decade of instability in economics, climate change, health care, and national security. National governments, particularly the U.S., failed to anticipate or to respond effectively to these crises. Efforts to restore confidence in the global financial system after its collapse in 2009 proved futile. With less tax revenue, governments were unable to fix problems, such as in health care systems, infrastructure and governance. Initiatives to deal with climate change could not prevent widespread species extinction. Many coastal population centers were devastated by rising sea levels. Nuclear proliferation increased along with the global rift between rich and poor, and there was an obvious increase in the risk of nuclear or radiological attack.

With the failure of national governments, citizens began to look locally for solutions to their problems. People migrated from cities to the countryside, thus reducing the attractiveness of many population and financial centers as terrorist targets. Communities created locally managed “mutual aid” associations and “health care cooperatives” to cope with personal health catastrophes. They restructured economies locally, with companies reducing in size, expanding in ownership, and taking a more active interest in where, how, and how well their employees lived. Peer pressure became a large driver of energy conservation at the local level.

Many people, particularly those displaced by climate change, resettled in new communities established around a particular set of values. Increased mobility among “knowledge workers” accelerated the sorting of a diverse population into these values-based communities. In many cases, the bonds between neighbors sharing similar values dwarfed the bonds of affection within individual families.

Concurrently with this reorganization on the local level, prominent members of the global community, in the tradition of UNESCO, the Carter Center, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ramped up efforts to address the pressing needs of society. Using recent technological advances, they created loose networks to coordinate their efforts, which over time evolved into a robust network of multinational organizations and non-governmental organizations.

These leaders benefited from a deeper understanding of human psychology and behavior, driven by advancements in neurotechnology and by analysis of the human brain. Some leaders developed into the role of “evolutionary designer,” whereby they could actively support both the development of individuals and the evolution of societies. However, this deepening understanding and the creative innovation it allowed faced great resistance. Despite widespread disaffection over the failures of the nation-state, few were willing to put trust in any new governance structure at the national or global level.

The detonation in 2017 of a nuclear device in Mogadishu changed how people viewed global networks. Hundreds of thousands were killed and the bomb spread airborne radioactivity across the Middle East and into Central Asia. First, people recognized that all their community-focused efforts were for naught without a global system to ensure stability and mutual respect between communities with different values. Second, they put more trust in leaders who approached problems with a sense of compassion and social justice rather than the previously admired traits of competitive drive and entrepreneurial spirit. These two forces created a “critical mass” of political will to drive the emergence of a new form of governance above and distinct from the traditional nation-state model.

Further development of this “umbrella” infrastructure culminated in the launch of the Global Collaboration and Governance Network (GCGN) and its widespread acceptance as the primary vehicle for global governance and mediation. Like Wikipedia, the popular open-source encyclopedia, the GCGN allowed contributions, suggestions, and changes from its users, subject to peer-review mechanisms to prevent or contain malicious behavior.

Through the GCGN, members of the global community create new entities to guide policy and decision-making on issues with global consequences. For example, networks of nuclear disarmament groups have collaborated to develop highly effective safeguards for nuclear material and an inspections system linking citizen groups with technology centers. Other groups evaluate the ecological and health impacts of communities and governments, making certain that decisions are transparent and that consequences are well understood. Another network tracks events in potential “hot spots,” marshalling the required resources to prevent wars. Many such issues are handled collaboratively via the GCGN, including intellectual property rights, governance of cyberspace, relations between different cultures, and the educational use of new technology. In all cases, it is individuals who collaborate via networks to brainstorm alternatives, evaluate outcomes, make decisions, and implement policy.

By 2039, decisions on global policy and inter-community mediation are made collaboratively by individuals living in diverse communities around the world via an open-source network that leverages the newest and best technology. The risk of conflict is mitigated by a generally accepted set of values including compassion, fairness, and sustainability. Individuals collaborate to address the root causes of problems using a wide range of economic, social, and political resources, as well as the psychological and behavioral insights provided by the “evolutionary designers,” a group that continues to grow in size, influence, and impact.

Further Reading:

- Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo, *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means*.
- Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (Gilmore Commission), *Reports I-V*.
- Castells, Manuel, *The Rise of the Network Society*.
- Yankelovich, Daniel, “The Third Ethical Revolution,” *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2007 (No. 2).
- Allenby, Brad, “Engineering the Earth,” in *Environmentalism & the Technologies of Tomorrow*, edited by Robert Olson and David Rejeski.
- “The Big Sort,” *Economist*, June 19, 2008.