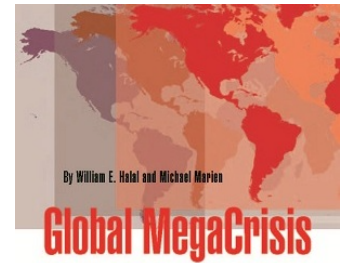


Collective Intelligence to Solve the MegaCrisis



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The coronavirus is a stark reminder of the devastating damage that could be inflicted by cyberattacks, superbugs, freak weather and a variety of other threats. These wild cards are in addition to the existential challenge posed by climate change, gross inequality, financial meltdowns, autocratic governments, terrorism and other massive problems collectively called the Global MegaCrisis.

I sense the world is so frightened by recent disasters that people are searching for new solutions. They seem ready to break from the past that is no longer working. Climate change is starting to bite, for instance, and there is a growing consensus that the status quo is no longer sustainable.

I have studied this dilemma for decades, and I think it can be best understood as a transition to the next stage of social evolution. The Knowledge Age that dominated the last two decades is fading into the past as AI automates knowledge, forcing us to move *beyond knowledge* and develop a global consciousness able to resolve the MegaCrisis.

Yes, I know this is a bold claim, but that is how the shift to a world of knowledge looked 40 years ago. When computers filled rooms, I recall telling people that we were entering a world of personal computers. The typical response was “Why would anyone want a personal computer?”

Just so, today’s post-factual era illustrates how the smart phone, social media, and autocrats like Trump have moved public attention *beyond knowledge* and into a world of values, emotions and beliefs. Now the challenge is to use these new powers of social media to shape a global consciousness, or face disaster.

While this may seem impossible, that is always the case before major upheavals. Nobody thought the USSR would collapse up until its very end.

In fact, the Business Roundtable’s recent announcement that business should move beyond the bottom line to include the interests of all stakeholders is revolutionary. It has now been promulgated by the World Economic Forum and other influential bodies.

The gravity of this change is such that business is now being told to help resolve the climate crisis. Larry Fink, who runs the biggest investment firm in the world (Black Rock), directed the companies he owns to help address climate costs in their operations; within days, many firms announced climate plans. ***This historic shift in consciousness could make corporations models of cooperation for society at large.***

In short, I think the world is heading toward some type of historic shift in consciousness, a collective epiphany, a code of global ethics, a spiritual revolution, a political paradigm shift or a new mindset. Without a consciousness based on global unity, cooperation and other essential beliefs, there seems little hope. And with a shift to global consciousness, it all seems possible.

Toward a Global Consciousness

I sent the above background information to readers of my newsletter at BillHalal.com and asked them to provide short “solutions” to the MegaCrisis. The seven statements we received are noted briefly in this analysis. This is hardly a scientific survey, but it does represent a collection of forward ideas by some of the best thought leaders in the world. Here’s my quick analysis of what each has to offer, followed by what we can learn collectively.

The central theme running through these diverse statements is that the governing ideas inherited from the industrial past are outdated and heading toward disaster. It is a collapse of today’s reigning “materialist” ideology of Capitalism, economic growth, money, power, self-interest, rationality, knowledge, etc. These values remain valid and useful, of course, but they are now badly limited. Prevailing practices in the US, as the most prominent example, are failing to address the climate crisis, low wage employee welfare, universal health care, women’s rights, political gridlock, aging infrastructure and other social issues that lie beyond sheer economics.

For instance, **Ruben Nelson**, Executive Director, Foresight Canada, sees this as the passing of today’s “modern techno-industrial” civilization. While he is not hopeful about a solution, he does think what’s needed is a “wise, integral and meta-reflexive form of consciousness.” In other words, rather than thinking of economic growth, “The only way to grow, is UP.”



A penetrating view is provided by **Sohail Inayatullah**, UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies, USIM, Malaysia and Professor, Tamkang University. Sohail digs beneath the layers of these continuing crises to probe into the underlying causes. Sohail finds that we need a “Gaian re-balance by moving to a world with a quadruple

bottom line: Prosperity, Purpose, People, and Planet. A new Renaissance is needed – the transformation of self and society, home and plant.”

This could become a “Collapse of Capitalism” roughly equivalent to the “Collapse of Communism” in the 1990s, and it stems from the same fatal flaw – failure to adapt to a changing world. Communism could not meet the complex demands of the Information Revolution, and now Capitalism seems to be failing to adapt to a unified globe threatened by pandemics, climate change and the other threats making up the MegaCrisis.

Jim Dator, University of Hawaii, is dismayed by attitudes favoring economic growth over cultural and ecological values. “The only way forward is through the imminent self-destruction of dominant values, behavior and institutions, with the hope that a million phoenixes arise from the ashes ... countless tsunami that we must learn to surf with pleasure and pain.”



Such statements from prominent futurists are compelling. It seems the coronavirus crisis has brought these failings of the present American government, and other nations, on vivid display now for all to see. Criticism can be found running through common exchanges on the web and other media.

The big question remaining is, “What should be the new vision, values, principles, and policies?”

At the risk of appearing pedantic, I integrate what has been learned above and my forthcoming book, [*Beyond Knowledge*](#), to outline five principles of what I consider “global consciousness.”

1. Treat the planet and all life forms as sacred. The Fermi Paradox notes that no other civilizations have been detected after decades of SETI searching. This rarity of life reminds us what a miracle planet Earth really is, and that we are responsible for its well-being.



The primary role of Nature is stressed **Peter King’s** vision of life in a Nature-centric society. Peter is an environmental Consultant and formerly with the Asian Development Bank. He urges us to follow the science. “Guided by the natural wisdom of Earth’s ecosystems, we would find abundant energy, food, medicines, water, jobs, economic growth and a more satisfying lifestyle. To avoid dangerous tipping points, we must move forward into a visceral and directly experienced relationship with Nature.”

2. Govern the world as a unified whole. Nations remain the major players in this global order, but they should be lightly governed by some type of global institution like the UN and other international bodies. Individuals should continue to be loyal to their nations and local institutions, but they should also accept their role as global citizens.

David Passig, Professor at Bar-Ilan University, Israel, finds two phases that could unfold from the MegaCrisis. “The first phase will disrupt the present idea behind globalization as mutual collaboration based on voluntarily respect and common interests. The second will establish the idea of ‘entanglement’ as *symbiotic undetachable ties* with enforced collaboration that respects mutual dependency on each other.”

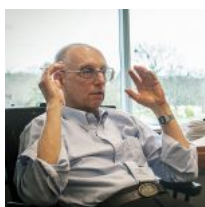


3. Manage markets to serve human needs and encourage cooperation. Free enterprise is the basis of society, and the good news is that business is on the verge of becoming *cooperative*. The Business Roundtable announcement that all stakeholders should be treated equally with investors seems an historic breakthrough. This move to a quasi-democratic form of enterprise could set a new standard for collaborative behavior and human values throughout modern societies. One of the benefits from a tragedy like this crisis may be a loss of faith in the status quo and an urge to cooperate. I see it everywhere, and it is a blessing in disguise emerging out of chaos.

Amy Fletcher, for example, urges us to listen to those who have no public voice as they often have good answers. Amy is Associate Professor of Political Science, The University of Canterbury, Christchurch New Zealand. She is concerned with the effects of the crisis, highlighting the failures that are prolonging the pain. She advises us to “listen to those voices who do not have a platform and speak truth to power. The role of the futurist is to facilitate those who do not have power because the answers we need may lie with them.”



4. Embrace diversity as an asset. Rather than becoming a uniform pallid bureaucracy, a unified world should embrace the wondrous diversity of cultures and individuals. Working across such differences poses a challenge, naturally, but differences are also a source of new knowledge, talents and human energy.



Dennis Bushnell suggests a “back-to-the-land” scenario, for instance, which would encourage a far richer diversity. Dennis is Chief Scientist, NASA Langley. He envisions a provocative possibility in which people become self-sustaining

on a small plot of land while connected seamlessly to the entire world on tele-everything. Dennis concludes that all problems would disappear – “no pandemics, no energy crisis, no climate change, no financial mess, no job losses, etc. But one must think big to see this solution.”

5.Celebrate life. Any society needs frequent opportunities to gather together in good spirit, enjoy differences and commonalities, and to simply celebrate the glory of life. The World Olympics Games, for instance, are special because they provide a rare feeling of global community. We could witness a flowering of celebratory events over the coming years to nourish the global soul.

Shaping Consciousness

This is only one small study, of course, but I hope it provokes thinking toward a widely held vision for planet Earth at a time of crisis. An historic change in consciousness is hardly done overnight, and the obstacles posed by the status quo are formidable.

But the Information Revolution provides a powerful method for shaping consciousness by using the Internet and public media. Think of the explosion of ideas, hatred and forbidden desires released by billions of people blasting into loudspeakers like Facebook and Twitter. Anybody can use the media to shape public opinion instantly, for better or worse. We are awash with the wildly diverse views of actors, TV stars, politicians, athletes, ordinary people with heart-breaking stories, cute kids doing smart things and influencers like Kim Kardashian.

The task we face is to shape a unified consciousness out of this morass of differences to solve the global crises that loom ahead. Today’s threats to reason is challenging us to counter wrong-headed beliefs and to provide more attractive visions, such as the principles for global consciousness outlined here.



I suggest the place to begin is by discussing these ideas as widely as possible, and to shape public opinion roughly along these lines. We invite comments, suggestions and contributions by emailing the author at Halal@gwu.edu. Please also send this article to friends, colleagues, and your mailing lists and tell them to sign up for my newsletter at www.BillHalal.com