

Reflections on Machiavelli and Montesquieu

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The field that has been covered over these couple of days has been immensely vast. Luckily, I should limit myself to reflections on the “benefits and outcomes of the ILC,” as well as on recommendations for the ongoing work of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), so my case is a little bit easier to make.

As a social scientist and criminologist, and as a member of the Academic Council on the United Nations System, I see many benefits of this conference. Among them, this conference has clearly demonstrated its relevance to the major objective of the United Nations as stated in its Charter, namely to save succeeding generations from the scourge of wars.

Time and time again through this hall one common message has resounded: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” which is not only a nearly universal canon in world religions and philosophies but also a slogan on the walls of the United Nations.

As an academic I will now go further and reflect on the relevance of the United Nations to this International Leadership Conference as a retired U.N. staff member whose last boss was Hon. Ban Ki-Moon.

Before I come back to this eminent personality, I would like to refresh your memory concerning the time before the First and Second World Wars—indeed, when global wars had not been thought of even in the dreams of most spearheading architects of governance, such as, for example, Niccolò Machiavelli. The father of modern political science who lived in Florence at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, he published in 1513 his renowned book *The Prince*. One more was Baron Charles Louis de Montesquieu of France, another modern political scientist and lawyer who in 1750 published his famous book *The Spirit of Laws*. At this International Leadership Conference, I do not have to say anything about the contents of these two books, save only recalling that “Machiavellianism” has become the symbol of cunning conservative governance, whereas Montesquieu has been heralded for progressive humanistic good/benevolent governance, like that, for example, of Confucius and of the United Nations.

I came across one book about both Machiavelli and Montesquieu titled *The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*. Because of the mandate of this conference, I thought it might be opportune to reflect on that dialogue in hell between these two modern political scientists, by all means not in contrast with the Little Angels we applauded yesterday in the Korean parliament, but because this conference gathers interfaith actors, parliamentarians and others who do or may believe, like me, in hell and paradise.

In 26 dialogues, Machiavelli gradually breaks the arguments of Montesquieu on the superiority of democracy over tyranny, let alone the authoritarian rule. At the end of the dialogue, an exasperated Montesquieu in the following words calls on God: "Eternal God, what have you permitted!"

80 kilometers away from here is the 38th parallel, which for Montesquieu was a climatic demarcation line between freedom and the rest of the world. According to him, because of prohibitive temperatures and inclement weather, every country below the 38th parallel is doomed to fail in governance. By contrast, every country above the 38th parallel can prosper because its climate is more generous for human development and governance. Looking at the Republic of Korea as we see it now, Montesquieu was wrong about the impact of climate on democracy in the South Korea. The evidence of this place where we are gathered is self-explanatory.

But I am not so sure of the other consequences of Machiavellianism so dramatically exclaimed by Montesquieu, but not foreseen at the time when the book with the dialogues has first appeared in print, that is in the second half of the nineteenth century. This is because Machiavellianism of that early time until mid-twentieth century was unperturbed by wars. Hence the First and Second World War. These two world wars have caused so much tragedy that no longer should this Machiavellian paradigm be acceptable in real politics.

This is why the U.N. Charter and a large number of other legal instruments aimed at the prevention of wars speak of conflict prevention. And there is a new secular script for member states: the U.N. Sustainable Development Agenda 2015–2030, adopted by General Assembly Resolution 70/1. It offers a perspective that breaks away from the old paradigm.

The resolution mentions *peace* more than ten times—a word so important to the Universal Peace Federation. In Sustainable Development Goal 16, the United Nations calls states to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Paradoxically, *family*, another word invoked so often in the International Leadership Conference, has no place in the agenda.

And yet, especially in the Global North countries, home ceases to be the bedrock of civic education. There are too few full-family households (couples with child/ren) to support an intergenerational transmission of civic and religious values that yield large prosocial outcomes. For example, according to Eurostat, in 2016, in Sweden, over 50 percent of its households were made up of one person—that's probably one of the highest numbers in the world. A somewhat less dramatic number of households—over 40 percent—were in Lithuania, Denmark, Finland and Germany (in descending order). This means that still in 60 percent of households there were at least two adult people living together. Things were better in Estonia, the Netherlands, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, and the Czech Republic, where 70 percent of households had two people, and over 80 percent in Spain, Poland, Slovakia and Portugal. In general, in the EU the most common type of household was composed of one person (33% of the total number of households), followed by households consisting of couples without children (25%) and couples with children (20%). Exactly 4 percent of households were made up of single adults with children. The remaining 18 percent consisted of other types of households with or without children.

The one-person household average for the EU is pretty high, in comparison with 15 percent for the rest of the world. Outside the EU, the rates of one-person households range between Japan (32%), the United States (28%), Canada (28%), the Republic of Korea (27%), Australia (24%) and New Zealand (24%), while in Russia the rate is only 19 percent. The Japan/Russia average suggests that in the Global North countries there are, roughly, 25 percent of one-person households, while the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) informs us that there are some 50 percent households with childless couples in almost all OECD countries. In sum, the Global South countries have lower proportions of one-person households than do the Global North countries. Some of the lowest rates are below 10 percent in India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines and Vietnam. Other developing countries are closer to the global average of 15 percent of one-person households. They include China (15%), Turkey (13%) and Singapore (12%).

For the Global North countries, this means that more than before civic education in schools and other public institutions must step in because home no longer is the place to educate the succeeding generations as it was before the demographic depression that this part of the world is now undergoing. For the Global South countries, especially those that are becoming overpopulated, new avenues for religious and interfaith dialogue in the name of sustainable development are needed, including modern progressive education.

Self-sustenance alone, without sustainable development, will not suffice to make the world prosperous in the years to come.

Nobody wants the repetition of the world wars of the twentieth century in this century. This is why the photograph of Hon. Ban Ki-moon in Poland on his visit to the German World War II Nazi camp Auschwitz speaks for itself.

We should continue interfaith and interparliamentary dialogue about how to reach the 2030 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, as the Universal Peace Federation has done for three years.

Therefore these shortcomings resound in the conclusion of the aforementioned mega meta-analysis of 270 studies: Any effort to explain away the religion–crime relationship as entirely spurious is likely to be as futile as claiming crime can be completely explained by a lack of religion [...]. Thus, “the effect of religion on crime ‘explained’ by non-religious variables might be partly religious, though not detected...”

This is a criss-crossing conclusion. It shows indeed the infancy of criminological faith research. For agnostics, it is unable to discern dependent from independent variables. For believers, the conclusion demonstrates that *homo sapiens* is *homo credens*.

In reply to this question, three facts should matter. First, that the above interlocking of faith with secular values in countering crime should not be really so surprising because of the overriding near-universal acceptance of the Golden Rule—the law of reciprocity, in most of the religions and philosophies of the world.

This law is so naturally interwoven into the moral fabric that speaking of its inherency only may be not enough. Hence, in countering at least some traditional types of crime against life and property, it may be impossible and indeed unnecessary to discern secular from non-secular motivational factors because they form a common denominator for a humanistic reaction to crime.

Second, in both secular and non-secular approaches to countering crime, common to them is the issue of “good” and “bad” as logically defined in various moral philosophies and religions (binary or polyvalent logic).

According to the United Nations, today, over 80 percent of people worldwide identify with an estimated 4,300 faith-based organizations: religious or spiritual communities and, even more, cultural traditions that influence how these people see and treat the world around them: what they eat and drink;

when they work and have children; where they live and travel or even when they select a particular course of education and pastime.¹

Despite the above and the 2010 General Assembly resolution, by and large, the U.N. remains outright secular. Not a single word is about faith or family in the U.N. Sustainable Development Agenda. U.N. programs and projects accept little from the non-secular quarters of the world. However, the United Nations invites faith-based organizations to join governments and other actors in implementing its own agendas.

Most of the U.N. stakeholders see evidence as a material fact or, at least, as if it were an irrefutable logical evidence. Miracles hardly stand such tests, and legitimizing disobedience is a matter of personal choice, no matter how motivated it may be. Yet, it is this particular context in which the claim by Jan N. Potocki (1761–1815), Polish-French-Russian Orientalist and ethno-linguist, is worth remembering: “Truth does not confine itself to a mathematical proof”.

In Christianity, for example, there is an invitation to have a personal relationship with a God (Jesus in particular) who forgives, guides, and loves. In no way intending any sacrilege, Jesus is, in criminological terms, the ultimate provider of powerful social support. This is received through individual belief and, when writ large, through membership in a community that is mandated to help those inside and outside the congregation.

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¹ UNEP/United Nations Environmental Programme (2016), *Environment, Religion and Culture in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, United Nations, Nairobi, p. iv.