



November 2021

Response to Panelists

Contribution to GTI Forum [An Earth Constitution: Has the Time Come?](#)

Glen T. Martin

I am grateful to all the panelists for their comments on my essay on the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth*. I think there were both understandings and misunderstandings, so I will respond to these individually.

Several commenters emphasized evolving forms of ever-greater coordination and governance. [Andreas Bummel](#), for instance, argued that only “bringing together and including major stakeholders and balancing their views and interests so they feel sufficiently represented in the process” will confer the necessary legitimacy on an outcome. This process, he urged, involves UN reform moving through a UN Parliamentary Assembly and beyond.

This response embodies the central confusion, shared by several other responses, that our human situation is basically evolutionary, as opposed to revolutionary. Rather than simply a failed state, the condition of the world is more like a totalitarian state involving systems of domination and exploitation going back to early modern European imperialism, colonialism, and institutionalized slavery. This global political system is dominated primarily by the five permanent members of the Security Council. It is an economic system that has institutionalized exploitation of the Global South by the Global North and all the people of earth by global private banking cartels that create 99% of all money as debt to themselves and their First World imperial states. The headquarters of the World Bank and the IMF are not by accident in Washington, DC.

Climate science dramatically shows that righting the human condition cannot be done in gradual evolutionary time. Either we take the revolutionary step of creating global democracy and making a truly transformative “great transition” now, or we run the serious risk of going extinct, as nuclear scholars have shown nearly occurred multiple times as we approached the brink of nuclear war.

Finally, the Earth Constitution embodies exactly the “process” Bummel touts. It can only be ratified by the people of Earth *directly* under its Article 17. The people of Earth comprise all its “stakeholders” equally. That is why the Constitution is revolutionary. It gives us the most direct democracy possible at this point in history, arising from the will of the people of Earth. For many “evolutionists,” the word “stakeholders” is a code word for bringing the system of domination into the “conversation” about global governing: the banks, the imperial nations, the multinational corporations are all “stakeholders” in their view. But the result of bringing in these “stakeholders” can only be more domination, exploitation, and systemic crisis, not human liberation.

[Chris Hamer](#) advocates “integration of the democracies” as an alternative approach to putting strategic emphasis on ratifying the Earth Constitution. However, advocating a process of integration” again masks a system of domination and exploitation. There are no real democracies in today’s world. The French revolutionary idea of “*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*” has never been realized on our planet. Capitalism places immense wealth in a few hands, wealth that is used everywhere to subvert democracy and turn all so-called democracies into wealth-based oligarchies. And the system of absolute sovereign nation-states makes each so-called “democracy” an imperial destroyer of other people’s freedom and independence.

[Chella Rajan](#) rightly affirms that we need to go beyond the imperialism, neo-colonialism, and exploitation of contemporary institutions, but I strongly disagree with the “nod to anarchism” and the idea of a world governed by “revolutionary councils.” In his profound book on *Ecosocialism*, philosopher Joel Kovel shows that the anarchist approach would result in a world of immense duplication of efforts, a chaos of approaches, and a tragic lack of cohesion in addressing global crises, like the climate emergency. The Earth Constitution provides for a holarchical synergistic approach in which top-down and bottom-up unite in an explosion of creative possibilities such as that envisioned by Buckminster Fuller, Kovel, and many others.

[John Bunzl](#) points out that our planet is culturally very diverse and that we cannot have “one size fits all,” preferring a form of global cooperation over a democratic global government. This response appears to ignore that fact that there *must be something universal* making us all human that is the foundation for the democratic idea. Otherwise, a solution to our suicidal situation is simply impossible. Scholars such as Jürgen Habermas, Steven Pinker, and Noam Chomsky have shown that what is universal is the translatability of all languages into one another, giving us the real possibility of “dialogue directed

toward mutual understanding.” That is what the Earth Constitution makes possible. The one size that fits all is a global democratic framework that makes possible such dialogue, so that people, through democratic processes, can take charge of our failing environment, our condition of massive human rights violations, and our nuclear holocaust brinkmanship, and move us beyond these suicidal threats.

Without specifying alternative structures, several other commenters stress the centrality of the process itself. [Tim Hollo](#) emphasizes that the “process that leads to the constitution is no less than the constitution itself.” He cites Hannah Arendt’s “Reflections on Violence” about power springing from the people and contrasts this with the “top-down” approach of the Earth Constitution as well as “its continuing embrace of sovereign nation-states as one of the constituent elements of a global democracy.” In my 2016 book *One World Renaissance*, I draw on these same reflections on violence by Arendt in which she contrasts governmental violence with governmental power, showing that the weaker a government is in representing the people, the more it resorts to violence. The Earth Constitution, by actualizing the unified power of the people of Earth, has no need for violence, ending forever the horrific cycle of violence that characterizes human history.

This is precisely because the Earth Constitution does not “continue to embrace sovereign nation-states,” as Hollo wrongly claims. The so-called absolute sovereignty of nations is broken by the Constitution, and they are relegated to appropriate limited and regional federated sovereignty. The only legitimate sovereignty is the people of Earth (Article 2). The Earth Constitution is also precisely not “top-down,” but rather grows from the grassroots of 1,000 world electoral districts and provides for the grassroots people of Earth the tools, for the first time in history, to represent themselves in the form of democratic government, free of violence, precisely it represents their legitimate power. It unites the whole, which means that top-down and bottom-up unify in a synergistic holarchy.

Other interlocutors questioned whether the Earth Constitution process has sufficiently included marginal groups. [Ashish Kothari](#), for example, opines that the “hundreds” of world citizens writing the Earth Constitution may not have included “fisherpersons, crafts-persons,” etc. The World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA), of which I am president, is currently completing the defining of the 1,000 world electoral districts by population planetwide, called for by the Constitution, and instituting direct, secure electronic voting in each of them. Surely voting by

the entire planetary population will include “fisherpersons and crafts-persons.” All means all. As [Roger Kotila](#) explains, the group that happened to have written the founding document is entirely irrelevant. Democracy is entirely about who ratifies it.

[Ben Manski](#) outlines various movements that appear to be attempting the kind of cooperative and collective processes that might somehow result in an overarching constitution or unifying institution, a kind of reinvention of the wheel, as he seems to hope, before the last tipping point is reached beyond which human beings will be unable to stop climate collapse or nuclear holocaust. [Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkuyzen](#) also mires us in process, declaring that it is “a long path that can lead to a world commonwealth that ensures the unity in diversity that it by necessity needs to embrace and foster.” In reality, as I have pointed out in multiple ways, such a path does not really begin until we have ratified the Earth Constitution. Human beings are on a cosmic journey to ever-greater forms of realization and liberation, but today we have no way to overcome the destructive causal legacies of our tragic past, legacies of war, mass destruction, climate destruction, hate and fear.

All those who affirm an evolutionary solution, as urgently as they may voice this, are dragging us down into perdition, for the reality of our present threshold situation is truly revolutionary. We will either unite humanity to overcome capitalist domination and militarized sovereign nation-states or we will perish likely before the end of the twenty-first century. The Earth Constitution is not more of the same because the old system is constructed of historically contingent institutions founded on greed and absolute national borders. The Constitution for the first time unites humanity under a founded system based on universal human dignity and rights and the foundational unity in diversity of our true human situation. Never before has anything like this happened. We unite behind our common humanity: what could be more creative, revolutionary, and truly new?

Other commenters pointed to the necessity of a spiritual or ecological lens to the project of global collaboration. [Taina de Carvalho](#) emphasizes the need to truly reconnect with the Earth and our cosmic ground. She writes, “Amid the current crisis, the arts have an essential role to play, as they can raise our eco-social and aesthetic consciousness. They invite us to be grounded in this world and trigger a dialogue by letting us experience our interconnection with the world.” Such an emphasis on our need for spiritual and moral growth is important, but it will do little good for an

extinct species, which will be the case within the coming century unless major paradigm shifts in government and economics happen very soon.

[Anneloes Smitsman](#) likewise shows acute awareness of the need for a holistic consciousness that mirrors the profound holism of Gaia, and she rightly does not think the Earth Constitution gives this to us. However, in *The Earth Constitution Solution*, I show the ways in which the Earth Constitution forms a *necessary step* in the process of actualizing such a consciousness. Under our present world institutions, global capitalism and militarized sovereign nation-states, their institutional propaganda *actively defeats* any widespread transformation to truly ecocentric consciousness.

The crises we face are undeniably urgent. In light of that, [Alexander Lautensach](#) expresses fear of a possible trend toward “governing by emergency decree” and “severe curtailments of democracy” resulting from the “threat of paralysis, rendered huge by the pluriverse and particularly dangerous under the global emergency.” However, as the COVID-19 pandemic and many other global disasters have shown, that is exactly the condition of today’s world disorder: governing by emergency degree. The Constitution addresses exactly this situation as effectively and intelligently as possible. The global crises are coming faster and faster as the world careens into chaos, but the Constitution offers a tool for human beings uniting to democratically take control of the process. Instead of “moral ambivalence,” we need the decisive courage and vision to act now, before it is too late, to ratify the Earth Constitution.

[Roger Kotila](#) and [Laura George](#) underscore how the Earth Constitution meets the urgency of this moment. Kotila writes, “I contend that the Earth Constitution is a visionary gift to humanity, waiting in the wings to be embraced, and “just what the doctor ordered” to save the world.” Laura George emphasizes the legal power that the Earth Constitution gives to humanity to protect universal human rights, including the now almost universally violated rights of women. Like Kotila, she hits the nail on the head, for the Earth Constitution offers humanity a unique and unparalleled opportunity to reverse the tragic trajectory of our current disordered world system. In sum, I would say we have an opportunity to not collectively squander what may be truly the world’s greatest opportunity at this threshold moment in human history.

About the Author



Glen T. Martin is an author, lecturer, and Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Radford University in Virginia. He is Director of the Earth Constitution Institute (ECI) and President of the World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA). He has received several international peace awards, including the GUSI Peace Prize International, and has published hundreds of articles as well as twelve books on planetary transformation toward human liberation within a just and sustainable world system. His latest book is *The Earth Constitution Solution: Design for a Living Planet*.

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