

The drive to international rules and independent bodies

Some international rules are a good idea. There are rules of war, if only the nasty countries would follow them as well. There is the UN where countries can try to find ways of stilling conflicts. Often Security Council members veto solutions. There are rules of trade through the WTO which help without subjecting the signatories to international government.

There are then rules over migration, civil liberties, green policies and other contentious issues where the push for more to be determined by international lawyers has led to rows with frustrated democracies as well as with authoritarian states over too much reach and too much interference in domestic decisions and wishes.

One of my would be correspondents writes every day to blame a couple of billionaires who she thinks rule the world. If only, then it would be easier to sort out. The truth is the idea of more global government by international law and international quangos is well embedded in the governing elites of the advanced world. It has been endorsed by Parliaments, Presidents and Prime Ministers. Instead of concentrating on governing their own countries they spend considerable time flying round the world attending the G7, the G 20, the COP meetings, the UN and others. Each visit usually entails some international spending commitment and may be part of a negotiation for another Treaty or power for an international body.

UK voters were keen to get rid of the regional government level of the EU. It has still left us the global level, where the EU used to represent us but now we can represent ourselves. We now have our own seat back at the WTO. We can make our own decisions at the COP conferences, the WHO and the UN. We should do so in a way which starts to limit their powers instead of giving them more. Where they have valuable expertise and advice we can accept it, but it should be our call. Unfortunately the UN is not able to restore peace in Ukraine or the Middle East, the WHO was not able to stop a pandemic and the COP conferences are unable to get China and India to cut their CO 2 whilst expecting us to cut ours. Why do we think these bodies with more power could suddenly start to get things right? Why do we accept the lack of accountability of so many international bodies? Why does the media often refuse to criticise them when they get it wrong?