

RISING FORMS OF INTERDEPENDENCE

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One humanity: the inherent interdependence of global relations

By **Victor Broers**On **Jul 20, 2026**

For millennia, humanity has organized itself around the assumption that separation is the natural condition of existence. Tribes, kingdoms, nations, alliances, and empires emerged not only as political arrangements, but as reflections of a deeper conviction embedded within human consciousness: that we are fundamentally distinct from one another, and that survival depends upon securing ourselves against the other.

This perception was not born from malice alone, but from limitation. For most of human history, people encountered only a tiny fragment of the world. Entire lives unfolded within the boundaries of a single village, valley, or tribe. Mountains, forests, deserts, and oceans separated peoples not only physically, but psychologically. The unknown was experienced as danger, and those beyond one's horizon appeared less as fellow human beings than as distant abstractions or potential threats. Humanity understood itself through proximity, not through wholeness.

From this condition of partial sight emerged the architecture of politics and, eventually, international relations as a field of study, which is nowadays often indicated with the term "geopolitics". Human communities organized themselves around survival within a world perceived as fragmented and competitive. Power became associated with domination, security with deterrence, prosperity with strategic advantage. Borders evolved into psychological realities as much as territorial ones, shaping not only how societies defended themselves, but how they imagined themselves. History itself came to be interpreted as an enduring struggle between separate actors pursuing separate destinies – typically by the theoretical/philosophical approach of "Political Realism".

For much of history, this worldview possessed a certain internal logic. The limits of communication, travel, and knowledge reinforced the perception that humanity existed as disconnected worlds only loosely aware of one another. Consciousness adapted itself to the scale of experience available at the time.

Yet the twenty-first century has fundamentally altered the conditions of human existence. For the first time in history, humanity lives within an immediacy of interdependence no civilization before us has experienced. Economies are inseparably linked. Technologies collapse distance in real time. Information moves instantaneously across continents. Ecological systems disregard every political border humanity has constructed. A financial shock in one nation reverberates

globally within hours; a virus emerging in one city can suspend the movement of the entire world; emissions released on one continent shape the environmental future of generations everywhere.

Whether we recognize it consciously or not, humanity has already become a single community of consequence. Yet our psychological, political, and civilizational assumptions have not evolved at the same pace.



The world's tallest buildings, 1840 (Russia)

Separation as a condition of consciousness

What we call separation, between ourselves and others, between communities, between peoples, and between humanity and the living world, arises in the mind, not in reality itself. In its effort to orient and survive, the mind divides the seamless continuity of life into forms and boundaries, distinguishing this from that, self from other.

This capacity is necessary. But when these distinctions are mistaken for ultimate reality, something essential disappears from view.

Beneath the surface of appearances, life is not divided. It unfolds as one living whole: intricate, relational, and indivisible, expressing itself through countless forms while remaining fundamentally interconnected. Each of us exists through relationship. We are shaped by what came before us, sustained by what surrounds us, and inseparable from the wider web of existence of which we are a part. Separation, then, is not what reality ultimately is, but how reality is temporarily perceived.

As Eckhart Tolle has observed, we are often like a wave imagining itself separate from the ocean, forgetting the depth from which it has never departed.

This does not mean that distinctions between peoples, cultures, nations, or civilizations are unreal. Diversity is one of humanity's great expressions of richness. Languages, traditions, memories, and ways of seeing the world give texture and depth to the human story. But diversity does not inherently produce conflict, just as difference does not inevitably culminate in division. The tragedy of history lies not in plurality itself, but in the persistent assumption that plurality requires opposition.

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For centuries, humanity interpreted difference primarily through the lens of competition. Political orders were built upon the belief that security emerges through exclusion, stability through balance of power, and strength through strategic advantage over others. Entire systems of governance, economics, and diplomacy evolved from the conviction that human groups exist fundamentally apart, bound to pursue their interests against one another in an enduring contest for survival and influence.

Yet this perception increasingly collides with reality itself. Like life, our social, economic, technological, and infrastructural systems have become deeply interwoven and profoundly interdependent. A drought in one agricultural region alters food prices across continents. A financial panic in one market can erase livelihoods in societies thousands of miles away within days. A virus emerging in a single city can suspend the movement of the entire planet. Rare minerals extracted in Africa sustain technologies designed in California, assembled in Asia, financed in Europe, and used across the world. Emissions released by industrial economies reshape coastlines, weather systems, and harvests far beyond their borders. A cyberattack on one digital network can disrupt hospitals, energy systems, or democratic processes across multiple nations simultaneously.

Even the products we experience as local are expressions of planetary interdependence. A single smartphone contains materials, labor, knowledge, logistics, energy, and capital drawn from nearly every continent on Earth. The ordinary life of all people, around the world, already depends upon the coordinated activity of strangers they will never meet.

At the same time, instability itself has become contagious. War in one region reshapes migration flows elsewhere. Political extremism spreads through globally interconnected information ecosystems. Ecological collapse in one part of the world intensifies economic and social pressures in another. Increasingly, humanity experiences not separate destinies, but shared consequences unfolding at different speeds and scales.

Humanity has become inseparably woven into a shared condition in which nearly all major challenges are structurally interconnected. Human beings no longer merely coexist alongside one another; they participate in one another's fate. The actions of one community increasingly shape the possibilities available to all others. Prosperity, instability, innovation, conflict, and ecological disruption now move through a tightly interconnected human system whose parts can no longer be meaningfully isolated from the whole.

The operational translation of radical interdependence

And yet much of our political thinking continues to divide reality into competing compartments. Nations pursue isolated solutions to problems generated collectively. Institutions designed for a less interconnected age struggle to govern dynamics unfolding at planetary scale. Humanity possesses unprecedented technological power, yet still often interprets the world through psychological frameworks inherited from bygone eras.

This is why so many contemporary responses feel increasingly insufficient. Partial consciousness cannot resolve whole-system problems.

No accumulation of expertise or technological sophistication alone can compensate for a fragmented perception of reality. The deeper crisis of our time is not merely political, ecological, or economic. It is perceptual. Humanity has developed systems capable of connecting the world materially, while lagging behind in the moral and civilizational consciousness required to inhabit that interconnectedness wisely.

The flourishing of humanity may therefore depend upon a profound shift in awareness: from seeing ourselves as separate actors temporarily forced to cooperate, toward recognizing that we already participate within a single interconnected human reality.

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This does not require the erasure of difference, but its integration within a deeper understanding of belonging. Humanity must learn to see diversity not as a threat to unity, but as one of its expressions. Civilizations, like individuals, come into maturity not by eliminating difference, but by integrating it within a wider coherence.

Humanity is therefore being called toward a deeper form of coherence. The challenge before us is no longer merely how to coexist within an interconnected world, but how to consciously organize ourselves within the reality of that interconnectedness. This requires more than institutional adaptation. It demands a deeper understanding of who we are in relation to one another and, from that understanding, a different way of structuring our political, economic, and civilizational life.

The international institutions that emerged after World War II represented an important, though incomplete, awakening to this necessity. In the aftermath of unprecedented destruction, the founders of the United Nations recognized that humanity could no longer endure indefinitely under conditions of unconstrained rivalry among sovereign powers. Beneath the postwar architecture of international law, collective security, economic coordination, and regional integration lay a profound insight: that the survival of civilization increasingly depended upon humanity's capacity to cooperate beyond the logic of permanent antagonism.

Yet these institutions emerged from a transitional consciousness. They aspired toward unity while still operating within psychological structures shaped by fear, competition, and sovereign self-interest. As a result, they were designed less to transcend separation than to manage its consequences. Their limitations are therefore not merely procedural or structural, but perceptual. Because institutions cannot sustainably embody a level of coherence that the consciousness animating them has not yet genuinely realized.

The central question before humanity is therefore not whether peoples, nations, and civilizations will remain distinct. They will and should. Human plurality is not a problem to overcome, but one of the conditions through which human richness comes into being. The deeper question is whether distinction will continue to be organized around competition, or whether it can mature into contribution within a larger human whole.

To recognize humanity as fundamentally interconnected does not dissolve identity; it liberates identity from antagonism. Cultures, traditions, and nations flourish most fully not when they define themselves against others, but when they discover their place within a wider field of belonging.

Toward evolved global politics

Every civilization is ultimately shaped by the way it perceives reality.

The political orders of the past emerged from a world experienced as fragmented: people lived in distant territories, separate economies, isolated cultures, and largely self-contained spheres of survival. Under such conditions, geopolitics became the art of navigating separation. States learned to secure themselves against vulnerability, accumulate leverage against rivals, and pursue stability through deterrence and strategic advantage. Competition appeared not merely as a preference of history, but as a feature of existence itself.

But humanity has now entered a threshold in which the assumptions underlying classical geopolitics increasingly cease to correspond with reality. Humanity now inhabits tightly coupled ecological, technological, financial, informational, and biological systems whose dynamics transcend every border constructed by political consciousness. The consequence is profound: we continue to think in terms of independent actors while living inside systems that function as wholes.

The central political crisis of our age therefore lies deeper than rivalry between nations or competition between powers. It lies in the growing mismatch between the interconnected nature of reality and the fragmented structure of human perception.

So the real transformation in global politics will therefore not begin primarily through new treaties, institutions, or balances of power. It will begin with an evolution in consciousness: away from perceiving humanity as a collection of fundamentally separate entities toward recognizing it as a deeply differentiated, yet indivisible, human whole.

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This does not require homogeneity. Difference is not the problem; unconscious fragmentation is. A mature global order would not erase distinction, but situate it within a wider awareness of interdependence, where identities are no longer organized primarily through fear, antagonism, and comparative advantage, but through contribution to a shared human continuity.

Such a shift would transform the meaning of power itself.

In an interdependent civilization, power can no longer be understood merely as the capacity to compel, dominate, or insulate oneself from others. Increasingly, genuine power consists in the capacity to stabilize systems, cultivate trust, preserve the conditions necessary for life, and deepen the long-term flourishing of the whole. Under conditions of radical interdependence, the destabilization of others inevitably returns as instability within oneself.

The geopolitical imagination of the future must therefore evolve beyond the logic of managed rivalry toward what might be called conscious interbeing: the recognition that the flourishing of each is increasingly inseparable from the flourishing of all.

This does not mean conflict disappears. Human beings and civilizations will continue to differ in interests, values, histories, and aspirations. But conflict itself can be held differently: no longer as an existential struggle between isolated actors, but as negotiation within a shared reality from which no participant can ultimately withdraw.

Such a shift may appear idealistic only because fragmentation has been normalised for so long. Yet the deeper realism now lies elsewhere. No nation can secure enduring prosperity within a destabilized biosphere. Nor can any society indefinitely shield itself from planetary instability through borders whatsoever. No technological sophistication can compensate for civilizational incoherence.

Humanity's capacities have become global, while its consciousness remains dangerously provincial. This is the contradiction at the heart of our age. We possess unprecedented power to alter the conditions of life on Earth, yet remain psychologically organized around identities

and reflexes shaped by a distant and far less interconnected world. And so the defining question of this century is: can human consciousness mature (rapidly enough) to meet the scale of the world it has created; and recognise itself not as rival fragments temporarily sharing a planet, but as a single human story unfolding through many forms?

For the next stage of human evolution will not ultimately be defined by artificial intelligence, military supremacy, or economic scale. It will be defined by whether humanity can outgrow the illusion that it can flourish separately from itself.

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Victor Broers

Victor is a European thinker and the initiator of the Navona Network - an informal group of public leaders, diplomats, entrepreneurs and intellectuals who join forces in transforming Europe from an economic community into a European community of wellbeing. He's currently developing Manifest Europe - a positive future narrative.

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