As the twentieth century draws to a close, the problem, or perhaps I should say the problems, of world order loom ever large as the overriding concern of our time.

This way already apparent to Jacques Maritain at the mid-point of the century, when he published Man and the State (University of Chicago Press 1951), the final chapter of which is entitled "The Problem of World Government," which M. Maritain defined as follows (at 189-91):

The Problem of World Government — I would prefer to say, of a genuinely political organization of the world — is the problem of lasting peace.... mankind is confronted today with the alternative: either lasting peace or a serious risk of total destruction.... The spectacle we are contemplating today is but an instance of that unfortunate law that in human history matter goes faster than the spirit. The human intellect is always getting winded in catching up with the advance of matter. It is probable that with the discovery of fire the cave-man had to face predicaments not unlike those which our civilization is facing now.

The interdependence of nations which had emerged after the end of World War II he saw as a dubious blessing because the interdependence which existed was "economic interdependence, not a politically agreed-upon, willed, and built up independence" (at 189), with the upper hand resting with nature, matter and determinism rather than with reason and freedom, the characteristics of the genuinely political process. The trend of modern states, with their Hegelian exaltation of the impersonal mechanism of abstract laws and concrete power of the State into a superhuman person, is towards "supreme domination and supreme amorality" (at 192, 193).
Using his Aristotelian-Thomistic criterion of the perfect society as one characterized by relative self-sufficiency, Maritain took the position that it is the international community, politically organized, which is to become the perfect society, not only on a moral but also on a juridical basis. The World State, possessing legislative, executive, judicial and coercive powers, will follow a world political society.

Maritain distinguished the merely governmental way of conceiving world government, which he described as "wrong and disastrous" (at 202) from "the fully political theory of world organization" (also at 202). The former would be "a State without a body politic or a political society of its own, a world brain without a world body" (at 203). The latter will require not only popular election and representation, but much more: "It is by means of freedom that the peoples of the earth will have been brought to a common will to live together" (at 206).

He went on [at 207-208]:

_Living together_ does not mean occupying the same place in space. It does not mean, either, being subjected to the same physical or external conditions or pressures or to the same pattern of life ... Living together means sharing as men, not as beasts, that is, with basic free acceptance, in certain common sufferings and in a certain common task.

The Reason for which men will to live together is a positive, creative reason. It is not because they fear some danger that men will to live together. Fear of war is not and never has been the reason for which men have wanted to form a political society. Men want to live together and form a political society for a given task to be undertaken in common. When men have a will to live together in a world-wide society, it will be because they will have a will to achieve a world-wide common task. What task indeed? The conquest of freedom. The point is to have men become aware of that task, and of the fact that it is worthy of self sacrifice.
Given the human condition, the most significant synonym of *living together is suffering together*. When men form a political society, they do not want to share in common suffering out of love for each other. They want to accept common suffering out of love for the common task and the common good. The will to achieve a world-wide common task must therefore be strong enough to entail a will to share in common suffering out of love for each other. They want to accept common suffering task and the common good. The will to achieve a world-wide common task must therefore be strong enough to entail a will to share in certain common sufferings made inevitable by that task, and by the common good of a world-wide society. What sufferings indeed? Sufferings due to solidarity. Suffice it to observe that the very existence of a world-wide society will inevitably imply deep changes in the social and economic structures of the national and international life of peoples, and a serious repercussion of these changes on the free business of a number of individuals, who are not the most numerous in the world, but the most attached to profit-making. The very existence of a world-wide society will also imply a certain - relative no doubt, yet quite serious and appreciable - equalization of the standards of life of all individuals.

All of this would require a unified world political society (at 209):

*One* body politic is *one* organized people. Of course the unity of a world body politic would be quite different from the unity which characterized kingdoms or nations, and to which our thought is accustomed. It would not even be a federal unity, but, rather, let me say, a *pluralist* unity, taking place only through the lasting diversity of the particular bodies politic, and fostering that diversity.

The results, even for States, would be worth while, indeed (at 211):

In their mutual interdependence the nations could achieve a degree of real, though imperfect, interdependence higher than that they possess now, from the very fact that their inner political life, being freed from the threat of war and from the interference of rival nations, could become more autonomous in actual fact than it is at present.

This vision seems just as much in the future today as it did forty years ago. In fact, until very recently we have been kept from even the remotes possibility of its realization by the
authoritarianism, militancy and aggressive interventionism of Soviet Communism. Now that the Warsaw Pact has collapsed and the Iron Curtain crumbled, it is more obvious that there are other barriers to world order than those of Communism, even if they may be less primitive and less violent.

Nevertheless, the coming of glasnost and perestroika have made possible the resolution of conflicts in many parts of the world: Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Cambodia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Ireland, and even perhaps -- dare we think it? -- in the Middle East. It has also made possible, for the first time in human history, I believe, some possibility of progress towards world order itself.

I should say immediately that I recognize that the use of the phrase "world order," which I have already employed several times, is not free from difficulties. As we have seen, Maritain himself spoke of world government and the world state. I use "world order" instead of, say, "world peace," largely because it was used in the title of this round table. Nevertheless, I must admit that I am somewhat partial to the term "world order," if only because of its connotation of justice. I thus agree wholly with Maritain (at 211)?:

Ensuring justice by law, which is the main function of the State, should obviously be the main function of the World State...
Limping as human justice is, justice is the primary need of the human community.

(If you accused me of some professional bias in my view, I should probably have to plead guilty!).

It occurred to me that perhaps some contemporary reflections on Maritain's mid-century theory might be appropriate today in the near aftermath of the Persian Gulf crisis, especially in the light of what might be called the unanticipated consequences of victory. Those consequences
became almost immediately apparent after the Coalition victory, with the bloody repression by Saddam Hussein of revolts by the Shiites in the south of Iraq and the Kurds in the north, the appalling plight of the Kurdish refugees, and the return to non-democratic business-as-usual in Kuwait.

In this situation, several observations inspired by Maritain come to mind.

First, the United States must be encouraged to remain involved with the international community in the resolution of world problems. My own experience suggests that the greatest danger with the United States is not that it will be too involved in world affairs, but that it will be too isolationist, as a result of either deep-rooted tendencies or the post-Vietnam syndrome.

This year, being Year One of the Post-Warsaw Pact era, is a particularly vital time in the evolution of American policy. The necessity of defending Western Europe has vanished, and Soviet-inspired unrest is disappearing around the world. The Gulf crisis was one-time affair, which does not itself lead to a new approach to foreign policy. It is a time ripe for the evolution of a new weltanschauung. President Bush has proposed the name, though not so far content, of a "new world order."

Second, it is particularly critical to attempt to maintain the new vitality of the United Nations. Maritain stressed that "it would not be good, either for the cause of the idea or for the cause of peace, to use the idea of World Government as a weapon against the limited and precarious international agencies which for the time being are the only existing political means at the disposal of men to protract the truce among nations" (at 201). The U.N. is the closest we come to world government at the present time. The U.S. did not invoke even its blessing in Grenada or Panama, and withdrew from the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice
in respect of its mining of Nicaragua waters. In the 'eighties in particular the U.S. tendency has been to act before even consulting its allies in NATO. The partial integration of U.S. and U.N. policy is a development to be prized and built upon.

Third, to the extent possible, the role of the United Nations should reflect a genuine international consensus, and not simply a rubber-stamping of positions already taken by the United States. I think it achieved that status in the Gulf crisis, but barely. One has the feeling, though, that the American commitment to a military response might well have carried on, even in the absence of Security Council support.

No movement to world order can occur unless world public opinion is allowed to drive governments towards a common position. A disguised unilateralism is no substitute for a genuinely multilateral approach. A shouldering of responsibility by the U.N. for the condition of the Kurdish refugees in Iraq would for this reason be a positive development.

That brings me to a fourth point as to the fundamental importance of world public opinion. In the short run there is no way to any kind of world order except through national governments, but we must always keep in mind Maritain’s insistence that a merely governmental approach to world government cannot work, and that we have to bring together the peoples of the world, so that ultimately they become one people. We have seen a bit of that at work in the Gulf crisis. World public opinion, by which I mean public opinion in those countries where it can be easily measured, was responsible at least for the emphasis in the Coalition news releases of the pin-pointing of explosive devices so that there appeared to be no indiscriminate killing. It was also, I believe, responsible for the eventual assumption of responsibility for the Kurdish refugees by the U.S., the U.K. and France. I personally nourish the belief that world public
opinion will also require, perhaps in not so long a run, the resolution of international disputes by non-violent means. In fact, I expect that the success of non-violence as policy of resistance in so many national situations will gradually have an analogous impact in international relations.

Fifth, the danger that the Gulf War will put military spending back in vogue must be resisted. One might say that war has been very successful, as well as very prevalent, in the twentieth century, and certainly it has never been more technologically successful than in the Gulf War. I am not so naive as to think that military research and further technological advances in weaponry can be eliminated, but perhaps the unfolding of what I have called the unanticipated consequences of victory will help to reveal the unforeseen problems created by force-oriented solutions. The most pressing issues in the world today are economic, and economic inequality, boom-and-bust roller coasters, and trade problems are not resolved by arms.

Sixth, since the problems the world faces are, for the most part and most seriously, characterized as long-term crises rather than as one-time phenomena, they cannot be alleviated, or even treated, in a short-term way. We are in for the long haul, and a very long haul it will be. This is another reason that military solutions are not the answer. The greatest challenge in this context will be to keep the most prosperous countries fast to the task indefinitely.

Seventh and last, we should commit ourselves to strengthen democracy in the world in every possible context. Not only, I think, are democracies less likely to make war on each other, but as Maritain told us, the world-wide common task that will bring humankind together in unity is "the conquest of freedom," a challenge which we identify with democracies. We must remember that Maritain also spoke of the "suffering together" that the conquest of freedom will entail in order freely -- and finally -- to achieve solidarity.
Poverty is the greatest source of suffering in the world, as well as, I am convinced, the
greatest cause of wars. The democratic spirit, with its encouragement of the free flow of
knowledge about the less advantaged and (and its best, at least) its generosity towards the
underprivileged, is, in the last analysis the only wellsprings of world community. Again in the
words of Jacques Maritain (at 209):

[T]he sense of the common good of the community of peoples,
with the mood of goodwill and fellow-feeling it implies, is
implicitly and virtually involved in the freely developed will to live
together, which is the basic condition prerequisite for the
foundation of a world political society coming into existence by
means for freedom.

Perhaps Maritain would have written in 1991 exactly as he did in 1951. In any event, we can
be glad of the insights into today’s problems that he offered in Man and the State.