

## **The clock wasn't showing 100 seconds to midnight anymore.**

### **April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2051, 30 minutes to sunset, a beginning**

I was sitting on my favorite couch, drinking coffee from my favorite mug, when I realized it would be dark soon. I stood up and walked towards the window and partially opened it. Then my daughter called and reminded me to check the news. The United Nations had started to broadcast the news about the newly elected world leaders. They were chosen for the first time after the world's unification. They are self-made leaders, pioneers and visionaries. They have access to the accumulated knowledge of humanity through a group of specialists representing each field. The theme of this Earth day is united action. The world hasn't felt this fulfilled in a long time; or maybe it is just me. Something similar last happened on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1969. The news around the world reported that one of us had landed on the moon. Although, they additionally mentioned that Americans had done it; nevertheless it was a historical event in humankind's history. What is happening right now is what I dreamed to see one day, and perhaps a lot of us did.

### **Part I**

One of the three leaders starts a speech as such:

We once again redefined what it means to be a human. An ambitious, free and insatiable explorer. We are the result of the generation that gave science its deserved credibility after centuries of denial and conflict. That generation showed us what it knew then and what it wanted to change for everyone's sake. Science was showing us that the truth is not harsh, rather it is consoling and promising when understood correctly.

We have come a long way as it seems, but just a fraction of time when compared to the beginning of our existence. There is no longer any need for borders; we learned that a long time ago through the unification similar to that of the European Union, or simply every nation before the establishment of states. These experiences helped us accomplish this on a global scale. We have eradicated world hunger using technology. This only became possible after minimizing the waste and distributing resources fairly. We knew from the beginning that a disaster such as hunger was only an error in the system and not inherently impossible to solve. We, humans, trusted our innermost instinct, the exploration instinct, to lead us. We are born explorers, and if we die knowing we didn't understand everything, that is okay. We pass on the information, as others have done before us. It is fulfilling to know that our predecessor's dream became ours, and ours will become the next generation's. Aren't we today the gods that once lived in the skies of our own imagination?

It started to rain slightly, and I could feel the smooth wind coming in. As I was listening to the speech the sudden distraction of the raindrops changed my focus. I remembered my dream

back in the days when I was half my age now. Dreaming of a day when people of the world would choose a deserved leader, based on merits. I thought she would be the leader we need. She, unlike all the people who inherited the title of leadership, had earned the trust of people. Back in 2020 there were monarchs in the world who ruled or reigned over a number of countries, and most of these families and individuals had been born to be the kings, queens, sultans, emperors and emirs of our world.<sup>1</sup> Their assignment? Apparently to lead, as it seemed from the amount of wealth and power they had stumbled into. But this was also the case in some countries with democracy but without egalitarianism. I dreamed that she would rise above all the leaders without followers. Under her leadership children would learn in their history class about the word refugee<sup>2</sup>, characterising both humanity's generosity and cruelty simultaneously. A word that existed only between 1685 and 2045. I dreamed of a day when our leaders would protect us, value us as individual human beings and they too work together for human's prosperity globally.

### **Era of global leaders and hope – Between Part I and II**

A dream has a chance of becoming a reality when there is hope to pursue it. But how was my generation, in 2020, supposed to have hopes of change when the very mechanism of change itself, politics, was malfunctioning? How could an effective leader make critical decisions when the political system did not react until a disaster had happened? The next technological advancement that goes out of control or the next pandemic might not give us enough time to react if we don't have a common global action plan to respond unitedly.

Globalisation has enabled us to see the ship we are all in: the magnificent planet earth. Therefore, even our separate actions can lead to global disasters such as global warming, variety of harmful conflicts as well as threat of technological misuse. Adopted by all United Nations' Member States in 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were the world's best plan to overcome global warming and build a better world by 2030.<sup>3</sup> Out of those objectives, goal number 13 was dedicated to "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts". But to tackle this crisis, global action was required; hence global peace. To advocate peace and establish sustainable governance systems in all nations goal number 16 was defined: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". To grasp the scale of the challenge and the status quo of the time, we could look at the number of conflicts in 2018. Only in that year, 52 active conflicts (under the meaning of at least 25 battle related deaths) in the world were recorded; the highest in 30 years.<sup>4</sup>

There were also some exceptional individuals who gave a new attribute to global leadership. This time it was not measured by the amount of artificial power one possessed but rather by the scale of the movement one had started and led to bring about a global change. In the early 2000s a teenager insisted on going to school and her right to education. Her will could not

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<sup>1</sup> Washingtonpost 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary 2020.

<sup>3</sup> United Nation 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Allansson 2020.

even be stopped by the Taliban's murder attempt. She survived and not only went to school but also encouraged education in the world for children, and for girls in particular. Similarly and controversially another teenager stopped going to school and insisted on saving the earth from overheating. In one year, she had started a global movement which inspired teenagers from almost all nationalities to proactively claim their future. Last but not least, the third teenager had started an action plan to plant 1 trillion trees all around the world. The movement he had started was widened by the "Stop talking, Start planting"<sup>5</sup> campaign. The actions of these teenagers, supported by their parents, lighted a relighting candle<sup>6</sup>. The candle of hope whose light only spreads when we all work together.

## Part II

I hear the clapping and my attention goes back to the news. The second speaker has started a speech:

If we have learned anything from the past, it is that the future is in our hands. When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shared his dream, we were all there to make that dream our own. To make that beautiful future that he dreamed of, our future. He let us believe that for example racism could be eliminated. He did not necessarily talk about the solution, but rather the hope and the desired result. His speech made us imagine the outcome and get inspired to work together and stay together. During the Corona-19 pandemic back in 2020 there were leaders of Germany, Canada, New Zealand and many more who comforted us and brought us together. They gave us hope but not a false one, and they put people's lives over the economy. They understood one thing very well as leaders, the difference between the right and wrong compromises. In every challenging situation, decisions and compromises have to be made; however, the right compromise will lead to effective execution while the wrong one leads to disaster. Half a loaf is better than no bread, but half a baby is not worth more than no baby at all.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, not every leader did the same and rather mishandled the situation by choosing the wrong compromise. Their lack of empathy and transparency brought conflict and mistrust into their country as well as the global community. It would have been nothing if their decisions wouldn't have cost lives of individuals that could have been saved in the first place.

A moment of silence brought attention to the last point, and then the speech was continued:

We learned it the challenging way that, specifically in such situations, we need unified global actions more than ever. Leaders and their advisors should be equipped with critical thinking and while cooperating with one another, they should decide how and when to compromise. As a result of critical thinking, one leader can understand the situation and the problem correctly prior to a decision. Sweden was an example that

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<sup>5</sup> Plant-for-the-Planet 2020.

<sup>6</sup> A candle that does not go out and it relights itself after it's been blown out. It is also called as trick or party candles.

<sup>7</sup> Drucker 1967.

never locked down its country due to Corona-19. They did follow the global guidelines but at the same time they made their own decision that had the best outcome for them. The population density, the culture, overall healthcare system of the country and many more factors have led the decision to be functioning. We, the people, have accomplished so much within our capacity of understanding. We are capable of cooperation and communication better than any other species known to us. But we are at our best spirit when we have hope, when we are inspired, and when we know the direction which we are heading to.

Hearing about the hope and global leadership took me back to the past again. I was looking for hope and a leap of faith as were many others. My generation was opening its eyes to an old governance system and asking: How can a few individuals negatively impact us all by leading their own nation carelessly? All of the government officials were leading people, but separately and to different destinations.

Leaders have the authority to make decisions which is why critical thinking has always been a great attribute for leadership.<sup>8</sup> As I remembered my experiences during the Corona Pandemic, I was wondering if the leaders of some countries, for example the United States, China and Brazil, know about the effects their decisions would have and still decided to sacrifice people's lives over the economy. Peter Drucker explains the first step which effective executives take before coming up with a decision. They start with classifying the problem.<sup>9</sup> A decision maker should ask: Is this a generic or a truly exceptional event? It is in most cases the former rather than the latter. A wrong classification will massively affect the approach to the solution. For instance, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster was indeed an exceptional tragedy, but since the officials of that time classified it as a generic one, they treated it accordingly. The Corona disaster, however, was not the first pandemic in the world and there were already disciplines which should have been taken into consideration.

### Part III

The third speaker continued a speech with an indirect citation of the great historian, Yuval Noah Harari:

All the major problems of the world are global in essence, and they cannot be solved without global cooperation. In its absence, issues such as technological advancements could also pose a threat to our future.<sup>10</sup> Such thought-provoking ideas planted a seed of global cooperation, which has led to this day and to this speech.

Artificial Intelligence and similar disruptive innovations are our creations. We need to adapt to them, but we define the *how to*. Harari posed the most relevant question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; "Self-made gods with only laws of physics to keep us company, we are accountable to no one, ..., is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and

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<sup>8</sup> Baldoni 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Drucker 1967.

<sup>10</sup> Harari 2018.

dangerous gods who don't know what they want?"<sup>11</sup> Every generation, knowingly or unknowingly, is confronted by this question: What do we want to want? He left that question open for us to answer, a white page to be filled with our decisions.

We entered an era where we understood that we need global leaders and a specific kind of unification. Through decades of conflicts, the men, who were seeking power, were allowed to gain authority through immoral conduct and making enemies of other nations to rally their people around the flag. They shamed humanity but taught us an invaluable lesson. As collective beings and social animals we need purpose, something bigger than ourselves to look into. This can be anything but does not have to be a war or genocide, it can simply be winning a sport competition. However, by hacking ourselves and our environment we came to the understanding that it is not the meaning of existence we are looking for but rather the exploration and the journey itself. We are born explorers so let this be the competition we all take part in for our survival and advancement. Why should only a handful of talents work on the progress of humankind when our accumulated intelligence can improve and foster innovations much faster? Let us together "Tear down walls of ignorance and narrowmindedness, for nothing has to stay as it is. Take joint action – in the interests of a multilateral global world."<sup>12</sup>

### **The end of a beginning**

I turned my head and looked outside of the window. Only to realize the rain had stopped. I closed my eyes, and I could feel the fresh smell of a slightly wet soil. The clock wasn't showing 100 seconds to midnight anymore.<sup>13</sup> I took a deep breath. "I never predict. I just look out the window and see what's visible but not yet seen." This quote from Peter Drucker suddenly made sense to me. We also look at each other but don't see one another. What is visible in the future is that without global leaders, human prosperity and survival is at risk. But unfortunately, not everyone sees that, despite the fact that they are looking.

My daughter called, I must have fallen asleep on my couch, I picked up the phone, she started to talk and as I was listening to her tears welled up in my eyes, I paused and then replied: "I wish we had done more".

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<sup>11</sup> Harari 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Merkel 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 2020.

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