NEW YORK – For nearly four centuries, since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 ended the Thirty Years’ War in Europe, the concept of sovereignty – the right of countries to an independent existence and autonomy – has formed the core of the international order. And for good reason: as we have seen in century after century, including the current one, a world in which borders are forcibly violated is a world of instability and conflict.

But, in a globalized world, a global operating system premised solely on respect for sovereignty – call it World Order 1.0 – has become increasingly inadequate. Little stays local anymore. Just about anyone and anything, from tourists, terrorists, and refugees to e-mails, diseases, dollars, and greenhouse gases, can reach almost anywhere. The result is that what goes on inside a country can no longer be the concern of that country alone. Today’s realities call for an updated operating system—World Order 2.0 – based on “sovereign obligation,” the notion that sovereign states have not just rights but also obligations to others.

A new international order will also require an expanded set of norms and arrangements, beginning with an agreed-upon basis for statehood. Existing governments would agree to consider bids for statehood only in cases where there was a historical justification, a compelling rationale, and popular support, and where the proposed new entity is viable.
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