The dilemma is apparent: with the slow economic growth typical of mature economies and a politically constrained capacity to tax concentrated wealth, America cannot indefinitely maintain disproportionate hegemonic power without imposing additional burdens on its own people. This is not an American failing; hegemonic power is inherently impermanent and is increasingly outmoded as a way to organize global affairs. America and the world would be better off with another governance system, if the new system is widely accepted, stable, fair, and open to citizen input.

It is fortuitous when an impossible task, like maintaining disproportionate hegemonic power, is an unnecessary one. Indeed, with a globally integrated economy and diverse and expanding citizen-to-citizen linkages wholly nationally based armies are a foolish extravagance. There needs to be a citizen-driven way to establish policy and law globally, not in all things, but if and when such a scale is necessary.

The clear danger is that hegemonic power could give way to rivalries that carry significant risks and costs. An arms race would involve tragic opportunity costs for the nations involved and the world as a whole. It would detract from what is essential to the quality of our collective future: cooperation on global law and policy on several fronts. As noted in chapter 1, developing a multi-national security system would likely reduce costs compared to either hegemony or great power rivalry. This option is increasingly necessary and at present is relatively achievable.

In a global economy the quality of daily life may depend as much on global policy outcomes as on local or national factors. Global
democratic institutions to influence those global outcomes are largely absent. Indeed, it is hard to even imagine effective democratic institutions at a global scale. It is sometimes difficult enough to believe that we can effect change in our cities or neighborhoods. It is little wonder we feel powerless. We know that the world is becoming more interdependent, but cannot influence outcomes at that scale. Few would even know who to contact to communicate an opinion regarding the global future.

This does not mean, however, that transnational systems that protect basic human rights or the environment cannot be established. So too transnational economic and political entities have been established, including the European Union. As well, David Miller argues that a system of global justice is possible using international organizations and other large human institutions including states. This does not require a world state. I would argue, however, that achieving an effective system of justice may require a sense of global citizenship among individuals in most nations and a broad willingness to act politically on that perspective.

Global citizenship, in the first instance, is about locating, contacting, and communicating with each other. Individuals in every corner of the globe have the potential capacity to persuade each other that citizens can and should influence global political, social, and economic outcomes. Technologically, the possibilities are unique in human history. However, we need first to realize that it is not inevitable that inequality will always and inexorably increase and also that it is not inevitable that the global environment will deteriorate. It is not even inevitable that wars between nations will always be with us.

Though nothing global is ever easily accomplished, citizens can act at every level with global needs in mind. We can now communicate across once seemingly insurmountable barriers. Even homeless people in India, South Africa, and other nations have, with access help, linked together using new technologies. Many common needs are indeed nearly universal and have common causes and solutions. The technical means to link with others to pursue those needs are emerging.

How many people around the world are still unemployed today because some years ago American mortgage lenders made dubious loans? Those sellers then protected themselves by bundling and selling those loans, were protected by self-interested ratings agencies and giant insurance companies issued policies on those bad investments, policies that they could not possibly cover. All of this was