

## The Coming Transition in Global Governance

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Thank you, Yang Jiemian, for that introduction, and Good Morning, Everyone.

Before I took my current post as the Senior Vice President of the EastWest Institute in New York, I served in Washington as a Deputy Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In some ways, Homeland is the center of crisis management in Washington. It responds to terrorist attacks and hurricanes, to bomb threats and pandemic threats.

As such, it is an operational agency of government, and suffers, more than most, from the common failing of those in power to be able back step back from the immediate and address what columnist David Brooks has called “a crisis of context.”

By this phrase he points to “certain weak movements and nations, beset by internal contradictions, that can’t compete if they play by the normal rules of civilization. Therefore, they are conspiring to blow up the rule book.” He illustrates with examples of Russia, and the Islamic State, stating that they “are not threats to American national security, narrowly defined. They are threats to our civilizational order.” Some would say this comment is just an example of typical American arrogance.

In my view, it is not news that the so-called “weak” feel disenfranchised from the current order. For many in the world, including eight of the world’s ten most-populous nations, the post-World War II institutions were formed without their real participation. These institutions, formed by the victorious Allied powers, have served humanity remarkably well for 70 years. But in their current form they are losing legitimacy, and the breakdown in respect for the rule of international law is a symptom of an accelerating global shift in concepts of power and order. As Premier Li Keqiang suggested in his remarks yesterday, reform is needed, and a greater voice must be given to the global South.

In the United States, our national government suffers from its own crisis of legitimacy, created primarily by our legislature, and its inability to accomplish the basic

tasks of governance such as enacting budgets, and fed by an increasing partisanship and loss of a sense of common purpose. As the leader of the free world and founding partner of the existing world order, America today retains a diminishing claim to moral and political leadership on the global stage, even while it remains the most sought after destination for immigrants from the “weaker” world.

This crisis of context is being accelerated by technology, with its explosion of transparency, its stimulation of expectations of participation, its power to flatten organizational management structures, and its ability to support collaboration across boundaries of all kinds.

This democratization of information access is a direct threat to authoritarian regimes, which work hard to control its impact. But it is also a threat to industrial-age structures of any scale, whether private or public.

A Chinese investment banker observed to me recently that the advent of smart phones has created 600 million citizen journalists, undercutting the role of the party cadres as information sources for the Center, and supporting President Xi’s ambitious and impressive anti-corruption campaign. Another senior Chinese, a government researcher, opined that “the erosion of boundaries means the only remaining potential enemy of the State is the people.”

Of course it is important to note that the Network can also be used to create a distributed control system that strengthens centralization of management. As the latest Russian military strategy states:

Strengthening of centralization and automation of military forces and weaponry on the basis of transition from the old system of rigidly vertical command management system to global networked automated systems of management of military forces and arms.

The crisis of context goes beyond traditional security issues – both internal and external – that national and international institutions are finding difficult to address effectively. As Susan Rice commented last year in an address entitled “[America’s Future in Asia](#),” “many of Asia’s most vexing security challenges are transnational security threats that transcend borders: climate change, piracy, infectious disease, transnational crime, cyber theft, and the modern-day slavery of human trafficking.” For each of these a patchwork of formal and ad hoc arrangements is struggling to address the risks. Yet, these arrangements, which supplement the industrial age institutions, are key to the transition to a new order.

We need to continue to explore alternative institutions that can take the place of those that are proving incapable.

There is a role here for experimentation. For example, in April 2013 the government of Brazil hosted an international town-hall meeting – “[NetMundial](#)” – on the of cyberspace. The 1,480 participants from 97 nations, convened under the banner of “multistakeholderism,” ranged from ambassadors to academicians, from Microsoft engineers to a Chilean non-profit promoting the right of digital access. As I [wrote](#) then:

Multistakeholderism, like many young life forms, is an awkward and somewhat tentative thing. Seven languages spoken with consecutive translation, four sectors represented plus the remote hubs, representatives standing in line to make two-minute interventions, and the open observation of the small drafting groups produced a slow and only “rough” consensus. And, with no governmental representatives on the drafting groups, one had the unique experience of seeing Canadian, German and U.S. cyber ambassadors leaning in, straining to hear the deliberations.

Clearly such a mechanism is not ready to be applied to dangerous security or pressing economic problems. But then, neither was the League of Nations. It took one failure, and a second World War, before we came up with the current world order.

We have a long road ahead, and we must cover it quickly. With luck, diligence and goodwill, we will not require two world wars to cement the transition to a system that supports each stakeholder taking its common, yet differentiated, responsibility.

Thank you to CCIEE for the opportunity to share these thoughts with my fellow panelists and with this distinguished audience.

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