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It's good to be back in Doha. It's good to be back in the Gulf with so many friends from the Arab world. And it's good to be participating in this World Policy Conference, convened by the French Institute of International Relations, with so many friends and colleagues from the wider international community.

We are here because we are committed global citizens who share a common concern for the future of our fragile global order. As the ancient Chinese curse would have it, we live in interesting times.

In fact, these times are far too interesting. Where none of us can project with any confidence the futures that lie ahead for our world and our planet.

The Centrality of Global Order

I have an old-fashioned view. I believe that fundamental to all our global futures is the underlying architecture of the global order. The uncomfortable truth is what we blithely call the global order is a most fragile thing. It is as if in this post-modern, post-factual world, we have lost our collective historical memory of what global disorder is like.

After all, it was only one life-time ago that we saw global disorder on a grand scale. And before 1945, when we built the current global order, global disorder had in fact been the dominant reality in the history of international relations. In fact, it can be argued that historical forces of inertia, entropy and chaos constitute the "steady state" of international relations. And that the global order we have had for the last 70 years, which remarkably was able to navigate our way peacefully through a nuclear-armed Cold War for 40 of those 70 years, has been an historical anomaly.

I therefore start from the simple proposition that a functioning global order is infinitely better than disorder – and that a global rules-based order is infinitely better than the alternative. But given the vast array of historical forces, both geo-political and geo-economic, currently at work against our current order, forces which are strong, persistent and destructive, the incremental fragmentation, fracturing and potential destruction of the order will continue. To avoid this will require deliberate, conscious diplomatic effort to sustain the legitimacy, functional effectiveness and institutional utility of the current order.

This means strong political leadership and policy resolve actively to maintain the agreed machinery and decision-making processes of our order – including the UN, the IMF, the WTO and the wider machinery of the more than 600 international treaties we have agreed to as an international community over the last 70 years. Global order is not inherently self-sustaining. It requires continuing work. Business as usual does not work. It is not that the current order and its core institutions will collapse tomorrow morning. They are more likely to simply fade away, as the critical mass of forces currently corroding the order continue to grow. Unless we collectively decide to the contrary.

Nature of the Current Order



The current global order is an untidy amalgam of great power politics, global rules-based institutions, and a growing number of non-state actors who have orders, or non-orders, all of their own. That was in large part the nature of the deal struck in 1945, with the exception of the role of non-state actors. And that has remained the essential dynamic ever since. Great power politics speaks for itself. It is based on core national interests and how these can be preserved within the framework of the current current system. When the great powers work well together, the rest of the order usually functions well. The reverse applies as well.

As for global and regional institutions, centred on the UN-based multilateral system, their effectiveness will depend on the willingness of states to allow them to function properly, as well as the competence of the internal management of these institutions. Non-state actors represent the most dynamic area of change in the order over the last seventy years. The number of non-state actors has proliferated. As has their size and influence in relation to the state itself. This applies to global corporations whose private assets exceed the public revenue of many states. It applies to non-government organisations whose resources may now exceed those of UN humanitarian agencies. And most notoriously it applies to terrorist organisations whose explicit mission is the disruption and even destruction on the existing interstate system.

These are the various elements of what might broadly be described as the current global order, or emerging global disorder, as it increasingly seems to be.

Great Power Relations: US-Russia, US-China and Russia-China

Let's look at each of these elements in turn, starting with the state of great power relations. As of today, great power relations are in their worst state in a quarter of a century.

In US-Russia relations, we appear to have come close to a second cold war. The causal factors are many and cumulative: the invasion of Iraq; the proposed NATO expansion for Georgia and Ukraine; the Russian action in Ukraine; the imposition of financial sanctions by the west on Russia; close physical encounters between US and Russian military aircraft and naval vessels; various forms of cyber warfare, including American accusations of Russian interference in the recent US presidential election campaign arising from the theft of internal email communications from within the Democratic Leadership Council.

These are not small matters.

In US China relations, tensions over the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the broader competition for strategic space in East Asia and the West Pacific, has created the worst corrosion in strategic trust between the China and the US since normalisation.

Again, these are not small matters either.

These factors are also set against the background over the last three years of a much deeper strategic rapprochement between China and Russia, overcoming, at least for the period ahead, centuries of mutual strategic hostility.



We have therefore seen the most profound realignment in the strategic triangle between Beijing, Moscow and Washington since Nixon, when the US engaged China in a broader, defacto containment strategy against the Soviet Union. This has now been turned on its head.

And on top of all this, we now have the election of President Trump and the new uncertainties this creates at the deepest level concerning the future global posture of the US in general, and in his specific China and Russian strategies he embraces.

At this stage we simply don't know. Will Trump seek to re-normalise relations with Russia? Yes, based on everything he has written and said. But we do not know how far he will go on Syria, Ukraine and sanctions. Nor do we know how President Putin will respond, and with what level of flexibility. But we are no longer in a static situation, as we have been in what has become an increasingly zero-sum relationship over the last several years.

These major foreign policy questions are at least now all in play. For how long and with what strategic result we cannot tell.

With China US relations, things are on balance more likely to get worse than better. Contrary to some superficial reporting on China popping champagne corks on Trump's election to the Presidency, the bottom line is that it was clear throughout the election campaign that Trump believes that China is in large part responsible for what he defines as America's economic decline. He has threatened a general tariff of 48% on Chinese goods. And he has stated he will declare China a currency manipulator within his first 100 days.

The problem with these threats is that they go to the core of his domestic economic narrative, and are deeply problematic to abandon outright. Furthermore, it might just be that on these questions that he is to be taken at his word. At a minimum, we are likely to see an escalation in economic and foreign policy friction between the two. Although neither side at this stage has an interest in this spilling over into the security domain.

Overall, however, it is possible to see the US Russia relationship and the US China relationship swapping places over the next twelve months in terms of which is likely to become the most problematic for Washington. Although the caveat remains that it is still too early to tell what Trump will actually do. But from the perspective of rebuilding a functional global order, it is in all our interests that all three great powers increasingly normalise their relations.

The State of our Global Institutions

This brings us to the second pillar of the current global order which is the state of our principal global institutions, and their ability to anticipate and respond to the principal global challenges we now face. This is critical given the speed, intensity and complexity of the current globalisation process. These have created a series of challenges where the demand for effective global governance across multiple policy domains now vastly exceeds the supply of such global governance. This growing deficit in effective global governance has been compounded by the hollowing out of the traditional "autonomy" of the nation state itself, as an inevitable consequence of the globalisation process itself.

The result is that the state is left in no-man's land – without the policy reach to effectively deal with problems which have become as much international as they are national; while at the same time still held accountable by local political constituencies for actually solving such problems, while being effectively powerless to do so.

This in turn has caused the large scale abandonment of the politics of the traditional centre, which has been deemed powerless to act. And a parallel embrace of the politics of the extremes. We now see this unfolding across the world. The political integrity of the mainstream nation state is therefore brought into question. But so is the political integrity of the various institutions of global and regional governance, as these too are rarely sufficiently resourced or empowered to resolve the policy challenge at hand. And so once again, we find ourselves in no-man's land, stranded between both weak nation states on the one hand, and weak global and regional institutions on the other. Yet this is merely the background against which the new drama that is Trump now unfolds.

First, Trump is by nature a bilateralist, rather than a multilateralist. Because that's where the "art of the deal" is to be struck, rather than, in Trump's mind, through some interminable multilateral process. Second, he is by nature an nationalist, isolationist and America Firster, rather than an internationalist. Third, his priorities are principally domestic, rather than foreign, and it is the domestic lens through which he views the world. Fourth, there is the added challenge of Trump's attitude to free trade (potentially the end of the WTO); And finally, of course, there is the climate change (and perhaps the end of the UNFCCC, or at least American participation in the Paris Treaty)

For these reasons, our global and regional institutions are more likely, rather than less, to be marginalised by the Trump presidency. These institutions will therefore require strong advocacy from others in the international community to keep them afloat. They will also need a comprehensive program of reform for the institutions themselves to demonstrate their institutional effectiveness.

That's why I spent much of the last two years working as Chair of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism focusing on the practical, conceptual and institutional reform of the UN organisation. This report, entitled "UN 2030 – Rebuilding Order in a Fragmenting World," was released in September. It contains 12 generic principles of UN reform to guide future reform efforts overall. As well as a further 55 recommendations dealing with specific reforms across the various programs of Peace and Security, Sustainable Development, Human Rights, Humanitarian Support and management. personnel and budget. The report can be found on the website of the International Peace Institute, and I commend it to your attention.

I do not propose to outline it here. It was released so far in New York, DC, London, Paris and Berlin. And in early November I was invited to brief the Security Council on the report as well. But unless the incoming Secretary General takes UN reform as a first priority, the institution itself will continue to atrophy, states will increasingly walk around it in dealing with major global challenges, with the risk of the UN over time simply "dying the death of a thousand cuts."

Non-State Actors

My report on UN reform also deals extensively with the impact of non-state actors. on the institutions of global governance, and more broadly the global order.

Corporations.

Civil Society.

And how the UN now requires new, comprehensive partnership frameworks to extend the multilateral tent to fully embrace their work.



Unless this is done, global goals, like the Sustainable Development Goals, will end up as a dead letter: elegant phrases, but failing to translate into measurable reality. On the question of terrorism, this should become the unifying force for great, middle and small powers alike. The logic is clear.

Terrorism is a fundamental assault on the state and interstate system itself. It must therefore become the centrepiece of concerted global action – from prevention though to interdiction, and elimination.

If the current state-based global order does not respond effectively to both the opportunities and threats presented by the proliferation of non-state actors, then the order itself, and the institutions that support it, will be seen as increasingly marginal by the peoples of the world. And it is these same peoples who are currently abandoning the global political centre, and its underlying ideational assumption, in growing numbers.

Conclusion

For the future of the global order, therefore, there are many grounds for pessimism. But professional pessimism, however detached, however analytical, and indeed however fashionable, provides no basis for policy. We are not the hapless victims of the silent forces of historical determinism. We as global citizens, and the peoples, economies and governments we may represent, are also active agents of global political change. If we choose to be. Not just interested observers. But as passionate actors. Seeking to preserve, reform and revitalise the institutions of global governance for the future. Because in history there has always been a thin line between civilisation and barbarism. Between a global commons, and an atavistic nationalism. Between the multilateral institutions on international arbitration, and the bilateral application of sheer brute force. And it is our collective choice which side of that line we will defend for our common global future.