

New Dynamics in International Relations Working on Solving the Problems of the World: A Call for Action

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Introduction

As we watch the news, we have the feeling that the world is getting more complex day by day with the problems becoming harder to deal with (e.g. wars, vagaries of the weather, culture clashes and religious conflicts, refugees and displaced populations). There are bad news and good news but often we get consumed by the bad news with a feeling of pessimism. However there are good news as well (e.g. better ways of producing and preserving food, better medicine, transportation systems, travel opportunities). We do not quite know whether the glass is half empty or half full; it may depend upon where you are standing. We seem to be more reactive than proactive. Is there also a lack of good will; have we given up trying? This compilation takes stock of what is going on in the world today capturing the ‘best of times and the worst of times’. e-Leadership has emerged as a powerful tool fueling countries’ advancement (e.g. South Korea, Singapore) as well as companies’ transformation (e.g. Apple, Amazon). Nonetheless, is there a transformation problematique albeit a failure in our search for specific improvement methodologies as several sectors face difficulties to adjust with changes? While the private sector seems to be energized by innovation, the public sector is not staying behind either and moving ahead as well, at times overshadowed by political rhetoric and posturing. eGov has come of age and the e-leadership pf the public sector emerged as a decisive factor. Technology is crucial in practically everything we do. When we look at countries, we see that the ‘power shift’ paradigm of Alvin Toffler has maintained its relevance. While many countries have made the quantum leap forward (e.g. India, South Korea), several are struggling and falling behind beset by many adverse actors. Clean water is an issue in several areas; water processing and desalination technologies are available and could be used more widely. According to the World Bank we are making progress in dealing with poverty in the world; however, there is much more that needs to be done. Not to be overlooked are pockets of poverty in advanced countries with a deepening of the divide between the haves and the have-nots

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Agricultural technologies could be more widely used to resolve poverty and hunger issues. The international community has been looking at global environmental issues for decades; positive steps have been taken but there is a feeling that more could and should have been done. The world got energized by demonstrations in 2014 and 2015 and the leaders were brought in by the UN Secretary General to face the grim situation. As a result, the Paris World Conference on Climate Change made history by the adoption of a treaty engaging all countries in the world, both the public and private sectors, in efforts to make a difference. Implementation is underway and could in some instances face challenges. There is a silver lining however as solutions to the problems open up new opportunities and green business is making significant progress. Why are we not making use of our abilities to foster peace? Why do we have wars which appear to be endless? Is militarism overshadowing diplomacy? The US plays an important role in international affairs; however there are other important players on the world stage such as China, EU, ASEAN; in fact economic groupings are becoming increasingly important. We have gone from a bi-polar to a unipolar and now multipolar world; the way forward is constructive dialogue instead of constant diatribes; it should be recognized that populism is a significant factor both in national and international relations. US-China relation is being redefined and so is US-EU relation. Russia is an important player on the world stage. After the Second World War, ideologies proved to be a dividing factor pitting the east against the west and now as this major divide has been resolved, it looks like the clash of civilizations has become the basis for divisions among countries and groups and at times even triggering wars. The United Nations should be credited to serve its purpose of keeping the world at peace. It plays a crucial role in fostering cooperation among countries. The annual report of the UN Secretary General shows that important efforts are being made by the UN throughout the world to make conditions better for large segments of the under privileged populations. . Should not we be strengthening the United Nations and making it better? Should not we be preventing and resolving wars, avoiding major refugee problems as well as large displacement of populations? Special interest groups often use their power to influence the definition of common good. Globalism catapulted the world forward after World War 2 and free trade was seen as the way forward. Now it seems as if we want to go back to protectionism. We do have the means of resolving trade disputes. Trade agreements can be reviewed and improved. Let us go forward with a spirit of constructiveness. Indeed globalism can be improved.

Chapter 1: Attempt at a Comprehensive Look at the World's Problems and Possible Solutions

Taking a comprehensive look at the world, we find a mixed picture with positives and negatives. Is it the best of times, is it the worst of times? Is the glass half full or half empty? Are we entering a new era in international affairs may be even in national affairs since these two domains interrelate?

In the academic field, International Relations and International Business are two distinct subjects, generally taught in different departments, the first one with a legal twist and the second one with a business twist. In real life, there is a growing intersection between the two subjects albeit an overlap. It is also important to keep in mind that International Relations rests upon diplomacy with elaborate principles, rules and protocol. Common courtesy is a golden rule in diplomacy.

Ignorantia juris non excusat. Business on the other hand often makes use of crude methods and negotiation tactics; the basic idea is to win and keep the upper hand. In an attempt to provide a picture of the real world, we find new ways albeit dynamics as business executives get to occupy key positions in international relations.

Note: the next chapters look into more detail at specific issues and opportunities.

Methodological Considerations

In this day and age, we need to be careful about facts and analyzes; there are biases and more out there. In the academic world we recall Dean Michael Hamlet's principle of 'rigor and quality' both in teaching and research. In *International Relations*, the UN, IMF and World Bank have a vast network of primary and secondary sources and publish several reports, some periodically and some on an ad hoc basis. *The World Factbook* is a valuable source of international information. The *OECD* is a trusted source as well. There are several journals providing helpful information. The foregoing listing is illustrative rather than exhaustive. This chapter makes use of official information sources such as those pointed out above and other credible sources, at times citing in extenso to convey the full messages considered important, with proper attribution.

Conceptual Approach

We start our analysis with conceptual considerations. First, post facto, we can qualify the Cold War Era: as one of confrontation of two major ideologies. There were 'proxy wars' all over the world but we averted a nuclear confrontation between the two super powers. In the post-cold war era, attention is drawn to two paradigms:

1. *The End of History* (Francis Fukuyama)
2. *The Clash of Civilizations* (Sam Huntington)

The End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama is a book published in 1992 (expanding on an essay published in 1989) arguing that the end of the Cold-War marks the endpoint of the development of human history.

Fukuyama draws heavily on the Philosophy of Hegel and its interpretation by Kojève. Hegel, to summarize, saw history as evolving through conflict between opposing ideas (Hegelian dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis). Kojève translated this highly influential line of thought into an argument holding that the final condition of humanity's socio-political order is a homogeneous state ruled by a single victorious ideology. This will mark the end of ideology (and therefore of history) since such a society will be, according to Kojève, a "post-political" society which won't be divided by ideological differences.

In *The End of History and the Last Man*, Fukuyama sees the end of the Cold-War and the fall of the Berlin Wall as marking the end of ideological conflict with the unchallenged establishment of Western liberal democracy as the final ideological stage of human evolution. After the opposition between the liberal West and the communist world was resolved Fukuyama sees no further direction in which history can go. Hence the end of history is not to be understood as no more events happening and no more people born or die, but rather as the final resolution of the tensions which drive history forwards. The end of history for Fukuyama is the end of the making of history and

human progress in its Hegelian understanding (and by that denying Marx's view of history which saw the endpoint of history in a global communist society, see for example *The Communist Manifesto*).

Fukuyama's thesis in *The End of History and the Last Man* was heavily criticized by both other historical thinkers and history itself. Most notable among Fukuyama's critiques is Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) where he explains that cultural forces will take over ideological forces in shaping global history. Since September 11th 2001 Huntington's critique of Fukuyama's *The End of History* is proved painfully right, history did not come to its end (see End of History vs. Clash of Civilizations debate)

Next we look at a summary of:

***The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by Samuel P. Huntington**
Summary written by Hollie Hendrikson, Conflict Research Consortium

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order is an expansion of the 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article written by Samuel Huntington that hypothesized a new post-Cold War world order. Prior to the end of the Cold War, societies were divided by ideological differences, such as the struggle between democracy and communism. Huntington's main thesis argues, "The most important distinctions among peoples are [no longer] ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural" (21). New patterns of conflict will occur along the boundaries of different cultures and patterns of cohesion will be found within the cultural boundaries.

Part One: *A World of Civilizations*

To begin his argument, Huntington refutes past paradigms that have been ineffective in explaining or predicting the reality of the global political order. "We need a map," Huntington says, "that both portrays reality and simplifies reality in a way that best serves our purposes" (p. 31). Huntington develops a new "Civilization paradigm" to create a new understanding of the post-Cold War order, and to fill the gaps of the already existing paradigms. To begin with, Huntington divides the world into eight "major" civilizations:

1. *Sinic*: the common culture of China and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Includes Vietnam and Korea.
2. *Japanese*: Japanese culture as distinctively different from the rest of Asia.
3. *Hindu*: identified as the core Indian civilization.
4. *Islamic*: Originating on the Arabian Peninsula, spread across North Africa, Iberian Peninsula and Central Asia. Arab, Turkic, Persian and Malay are among the many distinct subdivisions within Islam.
5. *Orthodox*: centered in Russia. Separate from Western Christendom.
6. *Western*: centered in Europe and North America.
7. *Latin American*: Central and South American countries with a past of a corporatist, authoritarian culture. Majority of countries are of a Catholic majority.
8. *Africa*: while the continent lacks a sense of a pan-African identity, Huntington claims that Africans are also increasingly developing a sense of African Identity.

Following the explanations of the separate civilizations in the new paradigm, Huntington describes the relations among civilizations. Before 1500 A.D., civilizations were separated geographically and the spread of ideas and technology took centuries. Huntington argues that research and technology

are the catalyst for civilization creation and development. By 1500 A.D., evolution in ocean navigation by Western cultures led to rapid expansion and eventual domination of ideas, values, and religion.

Twentieth century relations among civilizations have moved beyond the unidirectional influence of the west on the rest. Instead, "multidirectional interactions among all civilization" has been maintained (53). In other words, cultural influence is interdependent; western civilizations influence and are influenced by smaller, less powerful civilizations around the world.

Huntington then refutes the idea of a Western cultural hegemony and the concept of an established universal civilization. He states that "global communications are dominated by the West" and is "a major source of the resentment and hostility of non-Western peoples against the West" (59). The notion of a single, universal culture is not helpful creating an explanation or a description of global political order. However, Huntington also argues that as modernization increases cross-cultural communication, the similarities among cultures also increase. The key to this chapter is Huntington's severance of modernization from Westernization. While the world is becoming more modern, it is simultaneously becoming less Western, an idea he expands upon in part two of the book.

Part Two: *The Shifting Balance of Civilizations*

Huntington starts this section by arguing that Western power and influence is fading. There are contrasting views on the West's hold on power. One side argues that the West still has a monopoly on technological research and development, military strength, and economic consumption. The other side argues that the relative power and influence of Western countries is declining. Huntington adopts the latter view and describes three characteristics of the Western decline:

1. The current Western decline is a very slow process and is not an immediate threat to World powers today.
2. Decline of power does not occur in a straight line; it may reverse, speed up, or pause.
3. The power of a state is controlled and influenced by the behavior and decisions of those holding power.

Also in this section, Huntington asserts the increased role and importance of religion in world politics. Religion is the societal factor that has filled the vacuum created by a loss of political ideology. Major religions around the world "experienced new surges in commitment, relevance and practice by erstwhile casual believers" (96). Huntington goes on to say that replacing politics with religion was also the result of increased communication among societies and cultures. People "need new sources of identity, new forms of stable community, and new sets of moral precepts to provide them with a sense of meaning and purpose" (97). Religion is able to meet these needs.

Chapter five, "Economics, Demography and the Challenger Civilizations," discusses the relative rise in power and influence of non-Western countries. Huntington specifically focuses on Japan, the Four Tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore), and China as countries, which asserted cultural relevance through economic successes. "Asian societies are decreasingly responsive to United States demands and interests and [are] increasingly able to resist pressure from the U.S. or other Western countries" (104). The ability of Asian countries to successfully modernize and develop economically without adopting western values supports Huntington's assertion that the world is becoming more modernized, but less Westernized.

Muslim societies, unlike Asian societies, have asserted cultural identity through the reaffirmation and resurgence of religion. Huntington argues that the resurgence of Islam "embodies the acceptance of modernity, rejection of Western culture, and the recommitment to Islam as the guide to life in the modern world" (110). Religion is the primary factor that distinguishes Muslim politics and society from other countries. Huntington also argues that the failure of state economies, the large young population, and the authoritarian style of governance have all contributed to the resurgence of Islam in society.

Part III: *The Emerging Order of Civilizations*

During the Cold War, the bipolar world order enabled countries to identify themselves as either aligned or non-aligned. In the post-Cold War world order, countries are no longer able to easily categorize themselves and have entered into an identity crisis. To cope with this crisis, countries started "rallying to those [cultures] with similar ancestry, religion, language, values, and institutions and distance themselves from those with different ones" (126). Regional organizations have formed that reflect political and economic alliances. These include Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Huntington also describes the idea of "torn countries," or countries that have yet to entirely claim or create an identity. These countries include Russia, Turkey, Mexico, and Australia.

Huntington discusses the new structure of civilizations as centered around a small number of powerful core states. "Culture commonality legitimates the leadership and order-imposing role of the core states for both member state and core external powers and institutions" (156). Examples of core states are France and Germany for the EU. Their sphere of influence ends where Western Christendom ends. In other words, civilizations are strictly bound to religious affiliation. Huntington argues that the Islamic civilization, which he identified earlier in the book, lacks a core state and is the factor that disallows these societies to successfully develop and modernize. The remainder of this section goes into great detail to explain the different divisions of core states throughout the world.

Part IV: *Clashes of Civilizations*

Huntington predicts and describes the great clashes that will occur among civilizations. First, he anticipates a coalition or cooperation between Islamic and Sinic cultures to work against a common enemy, the West. Three issues that separate the West from the rest are identified by Huntington as:

1. The West's ability to maintain military superiority through the nonproliferation of emerging powers.
2. The promotion of Western political values such as human rights and democracy.
3. The Restriction of non-Western immigrants and refugees into Western societies.

Non-Western countries see all three aspects as the Western countries attempt to enforce and maintain their status as the cultural hegemony.

In the chapter *The Global Politics of Civilizations*, Huntington predicts the conflict between Islam and the West to be a "small, fault line war," and the conflict between the America and China having the potential to be an "intercivilizational war of core states" (p. 207).

Islam and the West

Huntington goes into a brief historical explanation of the conflictual nature of Islam and Christianity and then lists five factors that have exacerbated conflict between the two religions in the late twentieth century. These factors are:

- the Muslim population growth has generated large numbers of unemployed and dissatisfied youth that become recruits to Islamic causes,
- the recent resurgence of Islam has given Muslims a reaffirmation of the relevance of Islam compared to other religions,
- the West's attempt to universalize values and institutions, and maintain military superiority has generated intense resentment within Muslim communities,
- without the common threat of communism, the West and Islam now perceive each other as enemies, and
- increased communication and interaction between Islam and the West has exaggerated the perceived differences between the two societies (211).

Asia, China, and America

Economic development in Asia and China has resulted in an antagonistic relationship with America. As discussed in previous sections, economic success in Asia and China has created an increased sense of cultural relevancy. Huntington predicts that the combination of economic success of the East Asian countries and the heightened military power of China could result in a major world conflict. This conflict would be intensified even more by alignments between Islamic and Sinic civilizations. The end of chapter nine provides a detailed diagram (*The Global Politics of Civilizations: Emerging Alliances*) which helps explain the complexity of the political relationships in the post-Cold War era (p. 245).

Huntington defines the Soviet-Afghan war and the First Gulf War as the emergence of civilization wars. Huntington interprets the Afghan War as a civilization war because it was seen as the first successful resistance to a foreign power, which boosted the self-confidence, and power of many fighters in the Islamic world. The war also "left behind an uneasy coalition of Islamic organizations intent on promoting Islam against all non-Muslim forces" (247). In other words, the war created a generation of fighters that perceived the West to be a major threat to their way of life.

The First Gulf War was a Muslim conflict in which the West intervened; the war was widely opposed by non-Westerners and widely supported by Westerners. Huntington states that "Islamic fundamentalist groups denounced [the war] as a war against 'Islam and its civilization' by an alliance of 'Crusaders and Zionists' and proclaimed their backing of Iraq in the face of 'military and economic aggression against its people'" (p. 249). The war was interpreted as a war of us vs. them; Islam v. Christianity.

To better understand the definition of the fault line between civilizations, Huntington provides a description of characteristics and dynamics of fault line conflicts. They can be described by the following:

- Communal conflicts between states or groups from different civilizations
- Almost always between people of different religions

- Prolonged duration
- Violent in nature
- Identity wars (us vs. them), eventually breaks down to religious identity
- Encouraged and financed by Diaspora communities
- Violence rarely ends permanently
- Propensity for peace is increased with third party intervention

Part V: *The Future of Civilizations*

In the concluding sections of his book, Huntington discusses the challengers of the West, and whether or not external and internal challenges will erode the West's power. External challenges include the emerging cultural identities in the non-Western world. Internal challenges include the erosion of principle values, morals, and beliefs within Western culture. He also contributes to the debate between multiculturalists and monoculturalists and states that, "A multicultural world is unavoidable because global empire is impossible. The preservation of the United States and the West requires the renewal of Western identity" (p. 318). The ability for the West to remain a global political power, it needs to adapt to increasing power and influence of different civilizations. Without adapting, the West is destined to decline in power and influence, or it will clash with other powerful civilizations. According to Huntington, the West clashing with another civilization is "the greatest threat to world peace, and an international order" (p. 321).

Observation:

These two paradigms are used as rationale for policies and actions. Attention has been drawn to their limitations, particularly if followed blindly Economic systems can follow different approaches of public and private sector interaction. Is the approach used by the US necessarily better than the one used by China? What is the definition of democracy in the world today? About the so-called clash of civilizations, should not efforts be made to build bridges among different civilizations albeit cultures, guided by the *UN Declaration on a Culture of Peace*, promoting mutual understanding and respect? Mauritius shows clearly that western and eastern cultures can co-exist peacefully and productively. Many countries in fact consider that cultural diversity is a plus factor. However, right wing leaders recently pointed out that 'whites' will soon be a minority both in the US and Europe and that the western culture has to be defended, pointing to the popularity of 'populist' right wing movement. We need to take another look at the 'melting pot' model and the so-called 'fruit salad' model. Theresa May recently pointed out that the different cultures are working along well in the UK.

Dynamics

Dynamics in international affairs can be quite complicated and there are no guiding principles. Case studies help bring some light on the matter. For example, relation between North and South Korea has been rather difficult over many years with no improvement in sight. Then came the 2018 Winter Olympic Games and representatives from the two countries walked together in the opening ceremony of the games. Some sort of agreement must have been reached between the two parties. President Moon from South Korea called for the end to the legacy of the Cold War and both sides agreed to a denuclearization of the peninsula, which still will have to be worked out into a formal document.

The following new factors may be of relevance: in the academic field, International Relations and International Business are two distinct subjects, generally taught in different departments, the first one with a legal twist and the second one with a business twist. In real life, there is a growing intersection between the two subjects albeit an overlap. It is also important to keep in mind that International Relations rests upon diplomacy with elaborate principles, rules and protocol. Common courtesy is a golden rule in diplomacy. Ignorantia juris non excusat. Business on the other hand often makes use of crude methods and negotiation tactics; the basic idea is to win and keep the upper hand. We are finding new ways albeit dynamics as business executives get to occupy key positions in international relations.

Realism is always at play in international affairs perhaps now supplanted or supplemented by constructivism, opportunism, Michaelism, populism, authoritarianism, 'bullyism' and more.

Now onto a few questions:

What is the relevance of NATO in today's world?

How would one explain what happened at the G-7 meeting in Canada earlier this year?

How would one explain the new dynamics in relation US-China, US-EU, US-Russia?

It is a fact that a new globalism is emerging. Also of relevance is incrementalism compared to rationalism in decision making and the 'science of muddling through' and 'learning curves'. Not to be overlooked, the art of 'pushing the can down the road.' Technology by the way has its own dynamics with many positive aspects characterized by new ways of doing things; there are negative aspects as well relating to cyber security and growing use of hacking.

Tribute to Stephen Hawking

We need human genius like him to give us a sense of direction. We are thankful for his predictions some of which can be said to be 'dire'. Perhaps more importantly in International Relations is his positive thought about 'the power of talking', a self-evident truth which has added meaning when stated by an authoritative source.

Positives

There are many positives out there as well as positive developments. Think of the landmark summit of US and North Korea leaders in Singapore in June this year, definitely a positive development albeit a breakthrough with more work to do to be on solid ground.

Most countries interrelate on a friendly basis; countries cooperate on a bilateral, regional and global basis. Most countries are in a state of peace. Most countries are making progress in socio-economic development, some faster and some slower.

The World Economy is Quite Complex with its Own Short Term and Long Term Cycles

The IMF conveyed a mixed picture in July 2018: 'global growth is projected to reach 3.9 percent in 2018 and 2019, in line with the forecast of the April 2018 *World Economic Outlook (WEO)*, but the expansion is becoming less even, and risks to the outlook are mounting. The rate of expansion

appears to have peaked in some major economies and growth has become less synchronized. In the United States, near-term momentum is strengthening in line with the April 2018 *WEO* forecast, and the US dollar has appreciated by around 5 percent in recent weeks. Growth projections have been revised down for the euro area, Japan, and the United Kingdom, reflecting negative surprises to activity in early 2018. Among emerging market and developing economies, growth prospects are also becoming more uneven, amid rising oil prices, higher yields in the United States, escalating trade tensions, and market pressures on the currencies of some economies with weaker fundamentals. Growth projections have been revised down for Argentina, Brazil, and India, while the outlook for some oil exporters has strengthened.'

The State of Happiness in the World

According to the *World Happiness Report*, there is a mixed picture out there. The 2017 report states that while Norway can be frigid and the winters bring lots of darkness, it is the happiest nation in the world. Denmark comes in second, followed by Iceland and Switzerland. The second tier of the top ten includes the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Sweden. Wellbeing is shaped by a range of factors. The report states that all top countries rank highly on all of the main factors found to support happiness: caring, freedom, generosity, honesty, health, income and good governance. According to the report, happiness in the US slipped from 13th in 2015 to 14th in 2017, stating that the reasons are declining social support as well as a decline in trust and an increased sense of corruption. Some of the unhappiest countries in the world are Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti. Many countries in the low and middle income groups saw gains in happiness. The report points out that there is an alternative to assuming that income is a measure of progress. An important observation is that there are unhappy people even in the 'happy' countries, some of which have a higher suicide rate than that of the unhappy countries.

Survey of Problems

The following findings of a survey of millennials by World Economic Forum 2018 provides a comprehensive picture with ranking of problems by their relative order of importance from the lowest to the highest:

10. Lack of opportunity and unemployment (12.1%)
9. Safety/security; wellbeing (14.1%)
8. Lack of education (15.9%)
7. Food and water security (18.2%)
6. Government accountability and transparency; corruption (22.7%)
5. Religious conflicts (23.9%)
4. Poverty (29.2%)
3. Inequality in income; discrimination (30.8%)
2. Large scale conflicts and wars (38.9%)
1. Climate change; destruction of nature (48.8%)

The following two examples provide an indication of a very serious problem:

- 1) BBC World News reported on April 29, 2018 that a huge glacier, the size of England, broke away and is adrift at sea! Consequent rising sea level
- 2) The CO₂ level is at a record high

Credit has to be given to human ingenuity. Often solutions to problems open up new opportunities, in other words, a negative can be turned into a positive: The WAFUNIF-ASUA Conferences on Climate Change at the UN in 2014 and 2016 showed clearly the path from problems to solutions with opportunities for 'green business' and new ways of dealing with the CO₂ problem with the use of artificial trees that absorb the gas. Of course it also makes sense to grow more natural trees and reduce deforestation..

Understanding the Trump Administration: The Complexity of Politics

The US plays a major role in international affairs. The fact is the world has gone from being bipolar to unipolar and now multi-polar. When we look at politics, we see that populism prevails, such as putting US interest first and make America Great Again, both a slogan and a rallying point. Every new US Administration faces a learning curve and the 'science of muddling through' comes to mind. There are obviously new opportunities. Bringing business leadership to government has its own challenges. When we look at the angles, we find a range of possibilities, from belligerence to outright hegemony, isolationism based upon nationalism. Realism often comes to light. The US has been working on redefining its relationship with the EU, a valuable partner rather than a 'foe'. In today's world, US-China relation is crucial. However the US wishes to also maintain its relation with Taiwan mostly for business purposes. US-Russia relation goes through ups and downs but the reality is that there is a close cooperation between the US and Russia. Regarding developing countries, of what use is it to refer to some of them as s* h* countries. US-relation with the Arab world is rather complex. On the other hand, US-Israel relation is at the closest possible. Now onto the US border situation. There are problems for sure and the US immigration policy is characterized as being 'harsh'; those who try to come in 'illegally' have to be 'punished'. US-relationship with Mexico which had been at an all-time low seems to be quietly improving. US relation to Latin America and Central America seems unchanged. US relation with Canada is tainted by what occurred at the G-7 in Quebec and so with the other five partners; but US-Canada relationship seems to be undergoing improvement. Trade agreements can be reviewed and renegotiated. Imposing tariffs has its own risks. On the whole though, it should be kept in mind that the US has good relations with almost all countries of the world.

North Korea

We have gone from the brink of a nuclear war with escalation of words to a dialogue proving that diplomacy is intricate but does work. There is obviously more to do. President Moon of South Korea refers to the end of the remnant of the Cold War. The turning point was the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in South Korea where the cooperation of North Korea and South Korea started. There was a meeting of leaders of North and South in April 2018 with a pledge to end war and to denuclearize the peninsula. It is obvious that China conducted quiet diplomacy in the back channel. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Korea went on a diplomatic trip to several countries. The confidence building efforts seemed to have worked with the release of 3 US prisoners by North Korea ahead of meeting of US and North Korea leaders June 2018 in Singapore which was successful with more work to do. There are more challenges to deal with. Efforts should be made to stay on the positive track, working on resolving the differences.

US-Cuba Relations

Now onto US-Cuba relation which has been tense for decades. The Pope used his 'magic wand' leading to a breakthrough under the Obama Administration with a normalization of diplomatic

relations. It looks like the relationship is “cooler” under the Trump Administration; cooperation continues and war is unlikely as Cuba is not perceived as a threat. It should be pointed out that Cuba has ‘normal’ relations with many other countries. It is noteworthy that Cuba recently took the decision to recognize private property.

Iran

The joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was negotiated and entered into by Iran, the United States, France, the UK, Germany, Russia and China in July 2015. The new US Administration pulled out of the agreement earlier this year even after the European countries entreated the US not to do so. The other signatory countries are still in the agreement. The US has imposed sanctions on Iran. China and EU are increasing business with Iran.

Wars

There is no major war in the world. However there are many local wars which appear to be never ending.

Iraq

During the cold war, Iraq was an ally of the US. It is made up of several ethnic groups with conflicts. Saddam Hussein used a strong hand to keep the country together with fair degree of prosperity. In 1990, Saddam Hussein took a gamble by invading Kuwait. The US under Bush Senior Administration took military action and pushed Iraq back. The Bush Junior Administration got involved in further military action leading to the topple of Saddam Hussein. Iraq was perceived as undertaking a plan of weapon of mass destruction with a threat to Israel. More recently the US has pulled out most of its forces which then had to be increased to deal with ISIS/ISIL, perceived as a major problem. The joint effort of Iraq and the US is perceived as having been successful. Iraq held elections and al Sadr promised an ‘all inclusive’ government.

Syria

The situation has been mostly peaceful since independence with some internal conflicts, essentially of an ‘ethnic’ nature. The Assad family, from a minority ‘tribe’ has been in power for years, at times with ‘oppression’ of the majority ‘tribes’. Outright civil war broke in the recent past and is still going on with large segment of the populations being displaced or fleeing overseas to seek asylum. The effort of the UN to bring peace to the country has not succeeded. The US intervened sporadically as well as the UK. Russia and Iran got into the fray. ISIS/ISIL is an actor in the situation. As al-Shām is a region often compared with the Levant or Greater Syria, the group's name has been variously translated as "Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham", "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (both abbreviated as ISIS), or "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (abbreviated as ISIL). There are conspiracy theories to reckon with.

Afghanistan

This country got caught in the Cold War, with a Soviet invasion and occupation. The US helped out by support (both military and financial) to the Mullaheeddin which led to the creation of the Taliban. The Soviet ended its occupation. At the end of the Cold War, the US stopped its help and the groups

concerned got dissatisfied and created the el Quaida which took a clear anti-US stance led by Ossama Ben Ladin and El Waziri. Following 09-11 bombing in the US, an invasion of Afghanistan was undertaken by a group pf western states. The military operation has now been scaled down, however the Taliban has been undertaking war on groups which are pro-US. Negotiation with the Taliban has been on and off with no clear breakthrough. It should be pointed out that despite being land-locked, Afghanistan is in a strategic location.

Refugees and Displaced Populations

As a direct consequence of the wars, large segments of populations were displaced and at times had to flee persecution seeking asylum in other countries with enormous hardships to the people concerned and at times to the host countries. One thought is that had the wars been resolved, this human miseries could have been avoided. The UN had made significant efforts to foster peace but the concerned parties have been rather intransigent. A major international problem is the situation in several Central American countries with populations being forced to seek asylum elsewhere. Mexico has been accommodating to some extent and the US as well. The US has however taken a rather strong stance recently against this movement fearing massive migration. Efforts should be devoted to helping the Central America countries strengthen their law and order system and thus avert the outflow (see section below dealing with migration).

Israel-Palestine Conflict

This is a situation which has been going on for decades, still with no solution in sight. We have to step back and look at history. The League of Nations gave a mandate to the British to oversee the area called Palestine. In this context, attention has to be given to the Balfour Declaration which referred to the creation of a Jewish State. When Palestine was given its independence by the British, the UN drew a partition plan for two states in 1947. In 1948, the Jewish Group went ahead and proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel which secured recognition of the Western powers. War erupted between the Arab-Palestinian Group and the Jewish Group as Arab populations were banished from the State of Israel which aimed at creating a Jewish State. Several neighboring Arab countries joined the war and more grounds were lost to Israel, with consequent 'occupation'; more wars in the 1960s and 1970s with more ground 'losses'. The UN took the stance that the pre-1967 borders should be the baseline for negotiation. Israel has taken the strong stance that lands lost by the Palestinian Arabs will not be returned. The Palestinian Group has been rather weak and became divided into two groups with one under leadership of Abass living in the West Bank and the other under Hamas living in Gaza; however because of the stance taken by Hamas against Israel, there is a de facto 'blockade' in Gaza. Under the UN Plan, Jerusalem is expected to have an international status. The Palestinians had indicated that it would create the capital of the Palestinian state in East Jerusalem. Past US Administrations had walked on a rather tight rope regarding the situation. President Carter made a major contribution. President Clinton is credited for the creation of a dialogue between the two sides. The Trump Administration seems to be in agreement with the stance of Israel and took the position of moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, unofficially recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The UN General Assembly has taken a resolution recognizing the Palestinian State; however an endorsement of that decision by the UN Security Council needed for full recognition of Palestine has not been forthcoming.

Ethnic Conflicts

There are several ethnic conflicts going on in various parts of the world. There is the thinking that not much is being done to deal with them and it seems that the way out is keep 'pushing the can down the road'.

1. Plight of the Kurds (Iraq, Turkey, Syria)
2. The Rohingya: is ethnic cleansing going on in plain sight?
3. Saudi Arabia and Yemen
4. Saudi Arabia and Iran
5. Jammu Kashmir: with forth and back and no way out as yet after so many years.
6. Minorities in many other countries are apparently been subjected to adverse action.

Extremism

1. Why is it a problem? Leads to violence, senseless acts
2. Multifaceted aspects
3. Desperate people do desperate things
4. Need for safety nets

Extremism - Thoughts by Prof. Vasso Vydelingum

We need to go beyond dictionary definitions of extremism and explore what has been happening to the world in the last two decades and note how people lives have changed. Extremism refers to people or people within organizations holding beliefs that most other people think unreasonable and unacceptable. Extremism also refers to person(s) who favors or resorts to immoderate, uncompromising or fanatical methods or behavior in getting their aims achieved. Extremism can be viewed or studied or observed from different perspectives, namely:

1. Religious Extremism, which can be innocent and peaceful but can also be expressed in violent extremism. Examples are Al Qaeda - Twin Towers, Taliban- anti education of girls and Mallala Yusuf, Boko Haram- anti education of girls and kidnapping of young girls and leading to cruelty and rape etc, So many more examples are there. The sufi/sunni conflicts are also worth considering. Look at the numerous examples of attacks on innocent civilians in Paris, Barcelona, London, Germany etc.

2. Political Extremism - These can be expressed in extreme right or extreme left. The Trump campaign - Making America Great again as a euphemism for making America White Again. America First leading to protectionist measures- banning this Muslims, Mexicans, increasing taxes on foreign goods etc. In the UK, the hate and fear of immigrants leading to a wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric lead to the creation of a new party UKIP which push to a referendum leading to Brexit.. Political extremism can be disguised as nationalist extremism.

3. Nationalist Extremism - The latest UN report on what is happening in Myanmar. Ethnic cleansing being carried while the world and the UN are incapable to intervene, This can be viewed also in other forms, such as racist/racial extremism.

4. Racist/Racial Extremism. Such extremism is expressed in the form of irrational hatred of another group purely based on what is referred to as 'race'. Take the case of the KKK and the

hate of black people and extremism expressed in violence and killing of black people purely based on race.

5. Changes in society -as a result of extremism. Security at airports, vigilantes groups, CCTV . The role and duty of all responsible leaders or e-leaders in society, including the UN, are about challenging extremism in any form to protect the vulnerable.

The Global Environment: Climate Change

In the interaction of human and nature, problems have emerged such as pollution and degradation of the quality of air and an increase of CO₂ level in the atmosphere. Improvement efforts have been going on for decades but it is obvious that not enough has been done to solve the problems. Political and economic interests are at play often with short term gains which hamper serious sustained efforts. The Paris 2015 Conference on Climate Change was a huge success with the adoption of a treaty by 193 countries. Following the needed ratification, the Treaty is now in effect. Implementation of the Treaty is underway with serious efforts being made worldwide not just by central governments but by local authorities as well as business and nongovernmental entities. The Trump Administration took action to pull the US out of the Treaty; however the States, local entities, businesses are adopting and following their own policies taking needed actions. In fact, it is considered that the time is ripe for 'green' businesses.

Poverty in the World

Around the world, 767 million people live in extreme poverty with less than \$1.90 per person per day, an amount which is impossible to support a healthy livelihood in any part of the world. Poverty leads to hunger. One in three children in low- and middle-income countries suffers from chronic undernutrition. Without a sustainable source of income at a sufficient level, young children and their families do not have access to nutritious food, clean water or health care. And the deadly effects of undernutrition cannot be underestimated:

45% of all child deaths worldwide are from causes related to undernutrition, or 3.1 million children a year.

At Action Against Hunger, we believe that no child should die from hunger. We help over 14.9 million people every year gain access to sustainable sources of income, clean water, nutritious food, and health care, but there is still so much to be done.

Global Poverty Facts

Here are some statistics that show the scale of global poverty and its devastating effects.

1. 767 million people, or 10.7 percent of the population, live in extreme poverty with less than \$1.90 per day.
2. 2.1 billion people live on less than \$3.10 per day.
3. 328 million children are living in extreme poverty.
4. At least 17 million children suffer from severe acute undernutrition around the world. Severe acute malnutrition is the direct cause of death for 1 million children every year.
5. Every single day, 1,000 children under 5 die from illnesses like diarrhea, dysentery, and cholera caused by contaminated water and inadequate sanitation.

Where is Extreme Poverty?

Africa is the continent with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty. See below for a breakdown of where people living with less than \$1.90 per day are located.

- 383 Million in Africa
- 327 Million in Asia
- 19 Million in South America
- 13 Million in North America
- 2.5 Million in Oceania
- 0.7 Million in Europe

Some Thoughts

Attention has to be given to poverty in advanced countries where the divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ has grown. Humanism seems to be failing.

Water Situation and Related Issues

844 million people don’t have clean water.
2.3 billion people don't have a decent toilet.
31% of schools don’t have clean water.

In many countries, there is a need for better conservation and reprocessing. Many countries have used desalination successfully. Many more countries could do so as the costs are not prohibitive.

Sustainable Development

The member states of the United Nations worked together to develop and adopt a comprehensive Plan of Action through 2030 to improve situations in all countries of the world. Implementation requires the efforts of each member states on its own, also working together in joint efforts, with the UN having a key role as well. Progress reports will be prepared annually.

The UNU invites us to EXPLORE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

See our growing collection of research, commentary and multimedia related to each SDG.





More on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to Transform Our World:

- GOAL 1: No Poverty
- GOAL 2: Zero Hunger
- GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being
- GOAL 4: Quality Education
- GOAL 5: Gender Equality
- GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality
- GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- GOAL 13: Climate Action
- GOAL 14: Life Below Water
- GOAL 15: Life on Land
- GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Migration

Migration has been going on throughout human history and was an integral part of discovery adventures and resettlement. Examples are people from Europe settling in Africa, Asia, North America and Latin America. The US was a land of considerable attraction by migrants from Europe and also from other areas such as China and Latin America. Migrant workers are to be found in many countries with numerous examples from the Middle East. With wars and violence, many people flee persecution and seek asylum in other primarily but not exclusively neighboring countries. The United Nations has been working on these migration issues for decades. On July 13, 2018, 192 member states of the United Nations completed an agreement on improved ways to handle the global flow of migrants. The US stopped its participation in the negotiating group in December 2017. Its handling of migrants, in particular the separation of children from their parents, has attracted international attention, with an attempt to understand the meaning of ‘punishment’ in context.

United Nations: Organization System, A Closer Look

The United Nations is a conglomerate consisting of the UN Organization headed by the UN Secretary General, specialized agencies each working independently with its own executive head, special programs and various peace keeping entities. Meetings of the conglomerate are held from time to time and are headed by the UN Secretary General, serving as convener and coordinator. The UN Organization is extremely important in that it consists of the UN Security Council working to keep the world at peace all the time (24/7), of the UN General Assembly with representatives of all member states and thus is a de facto world parliament, of the UN Economic and Social Council which deals with issues within its jurisdiction, of the UN Secretariat which is the executive machinery with responsibility to prepare and submit policy proposals to the legislative organs and also to implement policies and programs adopted by the legislative organs being thus the implementation machinery, and of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). When the UN Organizations fails to act, it is less the fault of the implementation machinery as such and more of the policy makers failing to reach agreement.

The annual report of the UN Secretary General outlines major actions being undertaken worldwide to deal with prominent issues. There is a long list of UN quiet accomplishments, often taken for granted. Could the UN do more? More resources may be needed. At times blame is made to the effect that the UN is rather 'bureaucratic'. No doubt the machinery is quite complex. But often political will of the policy makers can be a major factor. Also, implementation can be challenging, there are actions taken by the UN and there are those which require action by the member states. Donors and NGOs play major contributory role, both in terms of added resources and action as such.

UN and Conflict Resolution

The UN was set up to serve as a conflict resolution machinery. Negotiation is at the heart of that function with quiet diplomacy serving a powerful tool for peace making. When a conflict has resulted in open violence and military actions, the other tool used is that of peace keeping such as setting up a buffer zone while negotiation is undertaken to resolve the conflict and make peace. At times, member states and groups take action in their own hand and thus there is little that the UN can do. The UN has set up an agenda for peace which requires more support. It is obvious that the member states and groups may have their own agenda and interest to follow. Conflict resolution is thus rather complicated.

UN and Conflict Prevention

Conflict prevention is more difficult to undertake. It starts with the fact that member states of the UN does not want the organization to be 'spying' on them. However, there are situations where conflicts exist and there is cease fire. Monitoring systems are established to see that the conflict does not further escalate into war and there could be early warning system. The tools in context consist of detailed studies, negotiation, quiet diplomacy, using the so-called 'back channel' and peace building. At times, conflicts are submitted to the UN International Court of Justice for resolution.

International Trade and Investments: Are Trade Wars Necessary?

Globalization which took place at the end of World War 2 has been good for the world at large except for those unable to compete on a world basis. The IMF, World Bank and WTO have been playing crucial role. Negotiation leads to bilateral agreements, regional agreements and global (multilateral) agreements. A new globalism is emerging in light of changes in the world changes. Recently 'trade wars' seem to be looming, with tariffs entering the equation. Some renegotiations are going on. The importance of the WTO is being growingly recognized.

Technological Evolution/Revolution

Technology has been a key factor in human progress. Alvin Toffler refers to the first wave as being one of agricultural revolution, the second wave as that of the industrial revolution and the third wave as that of information; each of these revolutions made possible by technologies in the respective wave. We may now be in the fourth and even fifth wave based upon communication and telecommunication technologies. There are countries and companies which in fact create these technologies and they stand to benefit from them. In his book called *Power Shift*, Toffler refers to the *fasts* and the *slows*; the *fasts* being those creating the wave and riding it albeit benefiting from the wave and the *slows* are those left behind. Various entities and program of the UN aim at technology transfer, helping those left behind to benefit from the technologies and there is fair

degree of success in that respect with more to do. There are interesting stories of transformation whereby the slows went through a quantum leap forward, examples are South Korea, India and China which just a few years back were qualified as developing countries and are now leading countries. The key to the transformation process was education and investment in R&D. With technological progress comes downsides, for instance in the field of cybersecurity, hacking is seen as being a major problem. A look at the technological leading edge shows robotics as well as automation in general, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, mixed reality and virtual reality, all elements of the next 'big thing.'

New Leadership Albeit eLeadership

Leadership is key to progress in all human undertakings. Over the years, we have learned a lot about leadership in all its forms. In today's fast age of technology, it is often stated that a new leadership is needed, at times called eleadership which is one that relates to leading electronic entities and/or using technologies to lead entities of any nature, front end or traditional.

Human Rights

The baseline is the UN Declaration for Human Rights. The UN has been undertaking standard setting for many years, with fair degree of success such as the adoption of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Member states of the UN undertake serious effort at implementing the norms albeit standards with a system of monitoring and reporting to the Human Rights Council. The US is considered a 'laggard' and more recently pulled out of the Human Rights Council. There are several other bodies albeit NGOs that keep track of the state of human rights in the world, among the best known are The Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International.

State of Corruption in the World

Transparency International undertakes detailed annual analysis of the state of corruption in all countries around the world and publish a report thereon. The 2017 report shows a ranking with New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden at the top with little to no corruption. Hungary ranks 66, Turkey 81 and Mexico 135.

New Dynamics in International Relations

China is expanding its influence in the world, from Asia to Africa and Latin America. EU is doing more business with China. China is doing more business with Iran. There are some country specific issues to keep in mind; a look at the population structure shows that some countries have an aging population issue such as Japan while many other countries have a large segment of young people that is an asset to be developed, with India providing a fine example. The role and contribution of women should be more clearly recognized; it is noteworthy that Saudi Arabia adopted a policy of allowing women to drive. Women can make important contributions to economic and social development. Women in leadership position have shown that they can do quite well. A look at the relationship of Germany and Russia shows that the former has some degree of dependence on the latter for energy. However, interdependence could be a positive factor as the partnership can be improved. Russia and Iran are significant players on the world stage.

Bullying does not help in international relations which is based on mutually valuable partnerships, both bilateral and multilateral. Incidentally, the EU is bigger than the US. A question can be asked as to the usefulness of NATO in the world of today, keeping in mind that the Warsaw Pact has been dismantled. Are trade wars necessary? Partners in trade agreements could sit down and renegotiate. A good trend seems to be that member countries are rediscovering the usefulness of WTO.

1. A changing world calls for a revisit of well-known theories as to relevance and pertinence: realism, power politics, Machiavellianism, militarism, hegemony, rhetoric, posturing, constructionism
2. Conducting international affairs via tweeting
3. State actors; non-state actors
4. Is there a need for new theories?
5. The UN Charter: it is all there; still relevant; need for re-dedication and commitment; education/re-education may be appropriate

Conclusion 1: Bitter World

If problems are not solved, we are going to get either status quo or they are most likely going to get worse. There are stumbling blocks, often caused by intransigence, intolerance, indifference. Often some key actors take hard line and get into zero sum games. The issue of the 'haves' and 'have nots' cannot be avoided. It may not matter to some leaders if the glasses of the under privileged are 'half empty' or that 'they' do not have a 'glass.'

Conclusion 2: The Best of Times?

What some new writers are saying: Enlightenment now: the case for reason, science, humanism and progress (Steven Pinker). It's better than it looks: reasons for optimism in an age of fear (Gregg Easterbrook)

Conclusion 3: Working to Make the World Better

It takes effort, courage, determination; cooperation as the UN intended; pursuing a Culture of Peace as advocated by UNESCO and promoted by the UN; University for Peace (original); University for Peace in China (in the making); University for Peace in North Korea (under consideration). Minimalist theory; at worse, do the minimum to prevent things from going over the edge; not the best. Humane considerations; humanism should prevail over ruthlessness.

Chapter 2: Leadership, eleadership for the 21st century

https://www.academia.edu/22398546/eLeadership_for_the_21st_Century

<https://research.phoenix.edu/donald-hsu/publication/leadership-and-eleadership-analysis-contingency-factors-and-considerations>

Chapter 3: eLeadership in the Public Sector; eGov

<https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/singapore12/papers/Owarish-1.pdf>

Chapter 4: The Emergence of a New Globalism; Role of Economic Groupings

https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/bangkok18/pdf_ppt/Owarish.pdf

Chapter 5: US-EU Relation; Redefining Win-Win

<https://www.gasa.com/conferences/berlin17/pdf%20paper/Owarish%20US%20EU20Relation.pdf>

Chapter 6: US-China relation: cooperation, competition, conflict

https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/shanghai/paper_pdf/Owarish-US%20China.pdf

Chapter 7: Russia is an Important Player on the World Stage: A Look at the Facts

Russia has been and is an enigma; it may not be an economic super power but it remains a superpower in many ways. Some interesting facts: Russia was part of the Allied Powers during the Second World War, playing a crucial role contributing to victory. In the years after, the West apparently failed to pay attention as Russia then expanded its influence in Eastern and Central Europe and built a formidable empire called the USSR. The Soviet Union, sharing a common ideology with China, then sought to expand its influence in the world. The world then became divided between the East and the West. At times there could have been a third world war, such as during the Cuban missile crisis. Instead we got the Cold War. There were proxy wars all over the world as each of the two sides tried to expand its influence. Then a fact came to light recognized by Michael Gorbachev. The socialist ideology was not working very well dragging the economy of the countries in the Soviet bloc down; on the other hand, those following the western economic ideology fared much better (see Fukuyama, The End of History). Gorbachev and Reagan buried the cold war in the Mediterranean Sea. Relationship improved between the US and Russia and the west and the east. Then came bones of contention with Russia, and the West both the US and EU imposed sanctions on Russia. Crimea was definitely a case in point and relationship between Russia and Ukraine soured. Russia apparently interfered in the election in Ukraine to ensure that whoever gets elected President would be pro-Russia. Nonetheless, there is a significant cooperation between the US and Russia including for the space program, namely, the international space station and the launch of US satellites out of Russia. A growing number of US companies are doing business in Russia. There is a debate about Russia's possible interference in US elections. This is an ongoing debate with no conclusion yet. By the way, when situation improved between the west and the east, Russia was added to the G7 that became the G8. Later as conflicts unfolded, Russia was taken out of the G8 which went back to the G7. The diplomatic game is one of American black jack and Russian roulette; Russia is good at chess games while the US is strong at poker. Worthy of attention: Syria and Iran.

U.S.-Russia Trade Facts

Russia is currently the US 23rd largest goods trading partner with \$38.1 billion in total (two way) goods trade during 2013. Goods exports totaled \$11.2 billion; Goods imports totaled \$27.0 billion. The U.S. goods trade deficit with Russia was \$15.8 billion in 2013.

Exports

Russia was the United States 28th largest goods export market in 2013. U.S. goods exports to Russia in 2013 were \$11.2 billion, up 4.3% (\$465 million) from 2012. The top export categories (2-digit HS) in 2013 were: Machinery (\$2.3 billion), Vehicles (\$2.0 billion), Aircraft (\$2.0 billion), Electrical Machinery (\$674 million), and Optic and Medical Instruments (\$660 million). U.S. exports of agricultural products to Russia totaled \$1.2 billion in 2013. Leading categories include:

poultry meat (\$310 million), tree nuts (\$172 million), soybeans (\$157 million), and live animals (\$149 million).

Imports

Russia was the United States 18th largest supplier of goods imports in 2013. U.S. goods imports from Russia totaled \$27.0 billion in 2013, a 8.2% decrease (\$2.4 billion) from 2012. U.S. imports from Russia accounted for 1.2% of total U.S. imports in 2013.

The five largest import categories in 2013 were: Mineral Fuel (oil) (\$19.4 billion), Iron and Steel (\$1.6 billion), Inorganic Chemical (enriched uranium) (\$1.4 billion), Fertilizers (\$815 million), and Precious Stones (platinum) (\$813 million). U.S. imports of agricultural products from Russia totaled \$40 million in 2013.

Trade Balance

The U.S. goods trade deficit with Russia was \$15.8 billion in 2013, a 15.4% decrease (\$2.9 billion) over 2012. The U.S. goods deficit with Russia accounted for 2.3% of the overall U.S. goods trade deficit in 2013.

Investment

U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Russia (stock) was \$14.1 billion in 2012 (latest data available), up 20.7% from 2011. Reported U.S. FDI in Russia is led by the manufacturing, banking, and mining sectors. Russia FDI in the United States (stock) was \$6.3 billion in 2012 (latest data available), down 3.0% from 2011. The distribution of Russia FDI in the United States is not available. Note that no services trade data with Russia are available.

Ongoing cooperation between the US and Russia

There is an extensive cooperation going on despite 'bickering' and sanctions:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/space-nuclear-security-polar-bears-russia-and-the-us-still-have-some-shared-concerns/2017/08/24/dbae9f6a-86b5-11e7-96a7-d178cf3524eb_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ee651e0deb0f

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/space-u-s-russia-friendship-untethered-n806101>

World Factbook Russia

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

Russia remains concerned about the smuggling of poppy derivatives from Afghanistan through Central Asian countries; China and Russia have demarcated the once disputed islands at the Amur and Ussuri confluence and in the Argun River in accordance with the 2004 Agreement, ending their centuries-long border disputes; the sovereignty dispute over the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and the Habomai group, known in Japan as the "Northern Territories" and in Russia as

the "Southern Kurils," occupied by the Soviet Union in 1945, now administered by Russia, and claimed by Japan, remains the primary sticking point to signing a peace treaty formally ending World War II hostilities; Russia's military support and subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence in 2008 continue to sour relations with Georgia; Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia ratified Caspian seabed delimitation treaties based on equidistance, while Iran continues to insist on a one-fifth slice of the sea; Norway and Russia signed a comprehensive maritime boundary agreement in 2010; various groups in Finland advocate restoration of Karelia (Kareliya) and other areas ceded to the Soviet Union following World War II but the Finnish Government asserts no territorial demands; Russia and Estonia signed a technical border agreement in May 2005, but Russia recalled its signature in June 2005 after the Estonian parliament added to its domestic ratification act a historical preamble referencing the Soviet occupation and Estonia's pre-war borders under the 1920 Treaty of Tartu; Russia contends that the preamble allows Estonia to make territorial claims on Russia in the future, while Estonian officials deny that the preamble has any legal impact on the treaty text; Russia demands better treatment of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia; Russia remains involved in the conflict in eastern Ukraine while also occupying Ukraine's territory of Crimea. Lithuania and Russia committed to demarcating their boundary in 2006 in accordance with the land and maritime treaty ratified by Russia in May 2003 and by Lithuania in 1999; Lithuania operates a simplified transit regime for Russian nationals traveling from the Kaliningrad coastal exclave into Russia, while still conforming, as an EU member state with an EU external border, where strict Schengen border rules apply; preparations for the demarcation delimitation of land boundary with Ukraine have commenced; the dispute over the boundary between Russia and Ukraine through the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov is suspended due to the occupation of Crimea by Russia; Kazakhstan and Russia boundary delimitation was ratified on November 2005 and field demarcation should commence in 2007; Russian Duma has not yet ratified 1990 Bering Sea Maritime Boundary Agreement with the US; Denmark (Greenland) and Norway have made submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) and Russia is collecting additional data to augment its 2001 CLCS submission.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Refugees (country of origin): 427,240 (Ukraine) (2017), IDPs: 19,000 (armed conflict, human rights violations, generalized violence in North Caucasus, particularly Chechnya and North Ossetia) (2017) stateless persons: 82,148 (2017); note - Russia's stateless population consists of Roma, Meskhetian Turks, and ex-Soviet citizens from the former republics; between 2003 and 2010 more than 600,000 stateless people were naturalized; most Meskhetian Turks, followers of Islam with origins in Georgia, fled or were evacuated from Uzbekistan after a 1989 pogrom and have lived in Russia for more than the required five-year residency period; they continue to be denied registration for citizenship and basic rights by local Krasnodar Krai authorities on the grounds that they are temporary illegal migrants.

Trafficking in Persons

Current situation: Russia is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children who are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking; with millions of foreign workers, forced labor is Russia's predominant human trafficking problem and sometimes involves organized crime syndicates; workers from Russia, other European countries, Central Asia, and East and Southeast Asia, including North Korea and Vietnam, are subjected to forced labor in the construction, manufacturing, agricultural, textile, grocery store, maritime, and domestic service industries, as well as in forced begging, waste sorting, and street sweeping; women and children from Europe,

Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia are subject to sex trafficking in Russia; Russian women and children are victims of sex trafficking domestically and in Northeast Asia, Europe, Central Asia, Africa, the US, and the Middle East. Tier rating: Tier 3 - Russia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making a significant effort to do so; prosecutions of trafficking offenders remained low in comparison to the scope of Russia's trafficking problem; the government did not develop or employ a formal system for identifying trafficking victims or referring them to protective services, although authorities reportedly assisted a limited number of victims on an ad hoc basis; foreign victims, the largest group in Russia, were not entitled to state-provided rehabilitative services and were routinely detained and deported; the government has not reported investigating reports of slave-like conditions among North Korean workers in Russia; authorities have made no effort to reduce the demand for forced labor or to develop public awareness of forced labor or sex trafficking (2015).

Illicit Drugs

limited cultivation of illicit cannabis and opium poppy and producer of methamphetamine, mostly for domestic consumption; government has active illicit crop eradication program; used as transshipment point for Asian opiates, cannabis, and Latin American cocaine bound for growing domestic markets, to a lesser extent Western and Central Europe, and occasionally to the US; major source of heroin precursor chemicals; corruption and organized crime are key concerns; major consumer of opiates. It is important to note that relationship between two countries entails cooperation, competition and conflict all at the same time on an ongoing basis.

Report on Russia (World Bank Group)

Global growth continued its 2017 momentum and is currently expected to peak at 3.1% in 2018. Recoveries in investment, manufacturing, and trade continue as commodity-exporting developing economies benefit from firming commodity prices.

Oil prices, which firmed up in 2017, are projected to average \$65/bbl in 2018 and 2019, and \$66/bbl in 2020, but may increase further, especially in the short term.

Supported by deepening macro-economic stability and gradual monetary loosening, Russia's economy continued its recovery in 2017, mainly driven by non-tradable sectors. Growth momentum towards the end of 2017 slowed down, but picked up in the first quarter of 2018.

Russia's balance of payments remained stable. An increase in the trade surplus due to higher energy prices was the key factor behind the strengthening of the current account. Monetary policy remained consistent with the inflation-targeting regime, and is moving from moderately tight to neutral. Annual inflation now stands at a record low-level, below the Central Bank's target of 4%. The poverty rate is expected to decrease slightly due to low inflation and recoveries in private income and consumption, but remains above the pre-crisis level.

The banking sector's fundamentals are largely stable, but the share of state-controlled banking assets grew because of the continuing Central Bank clean-up. The share of state-controlled banks in the combined assets of the Russian banking system increased to nearly 70%.

Russia's growth prospects remain modest, with growth forecast to be between 1.5% and 1.8% in the 2018-20 period. However, in the short-term, these forecasts may change due to changing oil prices.

Relatively high oil prices, continued momentum in the global economic growth and macro stabilization would support growth. Yet, the growth forecast for Russia for 2018 has been slightly decreased to 1.5%.

A strategic focus on digital transformation has enabled Russia to build a national digital infrastructure. However, to gain significant socio-economic benefits from these changes, Russia will need to implement policies that accelerate the digital transformation of the economy's traditional enterprise sector, and promote R&D, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Special Note

Helping with the transformation of the world (personal recollection)

Allow me to share my personal experience with anecdotes. As Director of Training at UNITAR, I co-directed the UN-WB/IMF training programs for UN delegates dealing with economic and social questions. I invited delegates from the Soviet Union and China as well as from several countries that were on the socialist side e.g. Cuba. I thought that it would be a good opportunity for those delegates to learn more about the IMF and WB and the capitalist ideology in the works as such. At one of the dinners with the delegates and senior officials from the IMF and the WB I stuck my neck out and stated that the Soviet Union should be invited to join both the IMF and the WB, Some thoughts that I had gone too far. But my wish became a reality in a short while. I arranged for leaders from the Soviet Union and Japan to meet and discuss possibilities regarding the Kuril Islands. The Baltic States came and sought my help regarding UN membership and here again I briefed them out unofficially. When Romania wanted help to transform its economy, I arranged for leaders of Romania to meet with professors from universities in Georgia and an extensive educational program was arranged and implemented. When Mongolia was interested in parliamentary democracy, I arranged for leaders there to meet with professors also from Georgia universities and a training program was set up and implemented. (Note: there was a close cooperation between UNITAR (where I worked) and universities in Georgia). I arranged for workshops on the ways and means to go through from observer status to full membership both for North Korea and South Korea. I arranged for leaders from these two countries to meet and find common ground for cooperation, with limited breakthrough such as family visits.

Chapter 8: World Environment: Climate Change, the Treaty of Paris, What Next?

https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/shanghai/paper_pdf/Owarish-climate.pdf

https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/singapore16/pdf_ppt/Owarish-Climate%20Change.pdf

Treaty on Climate Change Implementation Efforts

<http://www.g-casa.com/conferences/berlin17/ppt%20pdf/Owarish%20Climate%20Change.pdf>

US Withdrawal

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/us-withdrawal-from-paris-agreement-mobilizes-governments-stakeholders/>

Strategic Automotive Technologies: The Eco Friendly Revolution

https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/prague15/pdf_paper/Owarish.pdf

Chapter 9: Strategic Leadership of Technology

<https://www.g-casa.com/conferences/singapore12/papers/Owarish-2.pdf>

Chapter 10: A Better Life for the Disadvantaged: The UN Does its Fair Share

https://www.un.org/sg/en/annual_report

Conclusion: Working for a Better World

It is often thought that the main actors are top political leaders; this is true to some extent. As the Treaty of Paris on Climate Change shows, in addition to the state actors, the others who can contribute to make a difference are international organizations, regional organizations, business organizations, non-governmental organizations, sub-national entities such as states and local entities in the US, action groups and individuals. A joint effort is thus possible, in fact needed as the problems become more complex.

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